WHY GORE AND BRADLEY ARE BOTH LOSING

THE NEW REPUBLIC

THE RISE OF ALAN KEYES
MICHELLE COTTLE

THE FOLLY OF WALTER BENJAMIN
RICHARD WOLIN

ANUARY 24, 2000

Send Him Home

Family Over Freedom

THE EDITORS

Miami's Doomed Crusade

By CHARLES LANE

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Stanley Hoffmann

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Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

Unfinished Business

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

As we enter a new millennium, I'm thinking about my remarkable father-in-law, Oscar Barnes, who just turned 99 and fully expects to celebrate his next birthday in the year 2000. You've come a long way, Papa! Born in St. Croix to a mother who died in childbirth, he was raised by an aunt in Puerto Rico, came to New York City at age 14, and still lives in his own apartment in Harlem.

In his lifetime, he saw all the amazing changes the century brought—telephones, cars, airplanes, refrigerators, radios, television....He's seen war and peace, the end of segregation, the rise of communism—and its collapse.

Papa's life is good. But the poverty he was born into still exists, 99 years later, for millions of children in America, even as we've become the most prosperous nation in the world. The basic statistics are grim: Nearly 20 percent of young children in this country are living in poverty—defined as a yearly income of $13,000 for a family of three. One child in ten lives in a household where the yearly income is under $7,000 a year. And two-thirds of these poor children belong to families where at least one parent is already employed. The knee-jerk advice—get a job—is not working for them.

Good Schools Are Essential

One way we can erase poverty is to ensure that poor children get the kind of education most of their parents didn't have—by raising standards, improving teaching, and making all schools safe and orderly. The AFT has been in the forefront of efforts to achieve this. But many children need much more than good schools.

No matter how hard their parents struggle, the effects of poverty often leave poor children two to four years behind before they ever enter kindergarten. Many never see a doctor when they are sick because their families don't have health insurance or money to pay the doctor bills. Their physical development may be slowed because they don't get enough of the right kinds of foods. And many don't get adequate intellectual stimulation, either from their parents or from the poor-quality daycare that's the best their families can afford. Some children who face these disadvantages in their early years suffer permanent damage; others develop more slowly.

Let's promise our elders the new century will care more for children.

Many do catch up as they go through school, but others just give up; and some become angry and frustrated. They are the class behavior problems—the ones who also keep others from learning. For them, education is a broken promise.

Ending childhood poverty ought to be a New Year's resolution—a new century's resolution, really, made by every elected official, every political candidate, every corporate CEO, every citizen who believes in the American Dream. No excuses. It can be done. Here are some of the things that need to be on the agenda.

There have been repeated attempts to make sure that all poor children have healthcare: these must be carried to conclusion. We must expand the earned income tax credit, which is designed to help the working poor and has already lifted many families out of poverty. It could help many more.

And a good education is fundamental. But it must include quality childcare for the children of working mothers and early childhood education, including preschool and full-day kindergarten. All of our children should have access to these—but especially our poorest.

In public schooling, we're making progress. But in too many places, setting standards is considered enough. It's not. It's like putting up higher hurdles on a track and expecting runners to clear them without any extra coaching or training. It won't happen unless we also help students who are behind by providing smaller classes, more time, ongoing tutorial assistance when they need it, and expert teachers.

My father-in-law has two great-grandsons, who are not only completely computer-literate but who will live to see changes he can't imagine. One of them should be a society that does whatever is needed to make every child safe and healthy and well-educated.

Let's promise our elders we'll make the new century a caring one—for them, of course, and for all the children in it. ▮

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CORRESPONDENCE

It's the candidates, stupid

TO THE EDITORS:

I was glad to see mention of the consequences of our current political apathy at the end of Jonathan Chait's "Race to the Bottom" (December 20). These consequences cannot be overstated. One is simply the danger of having an electorate so deliberately distanced from the electoral process. But the most serious consequence would be electing a seemingly nonideological leader like George W. Bush.

At the moment, ideology may seem superfluous to yuppies and those who deem themselves "moderate social liberals." But most social liberals do not believe in restricting a woman's access to legal abortion, nor do they seek to address social problems with "faith-based" solutions. And I don't know of any social liberals who want to repeal environmental and consumer protections. The complacent members of the electorate need to delve more deeply into Bush's record as governor of Texas before they so cavalierly support him for president. It would be too bad if this group woke up only in time to find its seemingly nonideological president making very ideologically conservative nominations to the Supreme Court.

MARY ANNE TOWNSEND
San Francisco, California

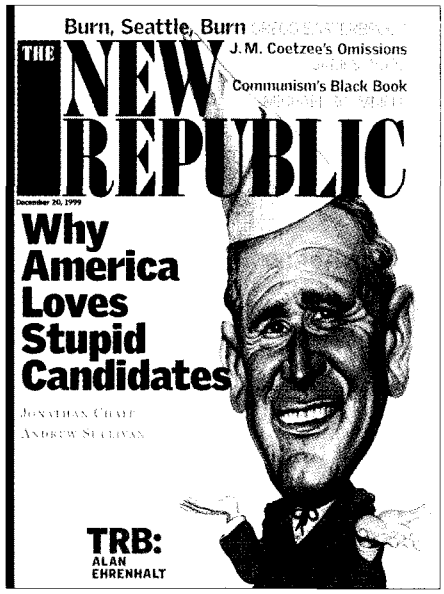
TO THE EDITORS:

Jonathan Chait seems dismayed at the anti- (or at least non-) intellectualism of most of the major presidential candidates. He should take heart from the fact that our greatest president of this century, Franklin D. Roosevelt, fell into the nonintellectual camp. Recall that when two of FDR's advisers were arguing diametrically opposed positions, Roosevelt breezily instructed them to "weave them together"—surely nothing a policy wonk, heavy-duty book reader, or deep thinker would ever propose. Perhaps contemplating the good the nonintellectual FDR did for our country will help Chait buck up.

ROBERT E. THOMAS
Chatham, New York

TO THE EDITORS:

Jonathan Chait claims that the "coverage of the [1992 presidential] campaign, in contrast to today's, stands out as a virtual celebration of intelligence." What planet does Chait live on? In 1992, Ross Perot's antics were pathetic and pathological. He quit the race during the Democratic National Convention (to throw supporters



to Bill Clinton), claiming that President Bush planned to crash his daughter's wedding, and rejoined several months later to diminish Bush's recovery. Perot's suggestion of a "town hall" method of governing was intellectually vacuous; this approach just manipulated the masses into thinking they were being heard.

Bill Clinton avoided any focus on foreign policy, and so did the press. He seemed issue-focused only because the press portrayed Bush as clueless and detached. The press followed James Carville's reductionist motto, "It's the economy, stupid," to a tee. It became impossible to discern a difference between journalists and members of the Clinton campaign team.

The 1992 media deserves much of the blame for ushering a nonadult into the Oval Office. Was this a "celebration of intelligence"? The high mark of intelligence during the 1992 campaign was when Dan Quayle, by all authentic accounts, cleaned Al Gore's clock in the vice presidential debate.

Chait concluded with a reference to "the happy delusions of a contented people." He's dead wrong. Far from contented, we are fed up with rank dishonesty and opportunism in the guise of intellectualism.

JOEL MARK SOLLIDAY
New Haven, Connecticut

TO THE EDITORS:

Your cover story on America's fascination with "stupid candidates" carried bad taste to a new high. I'm a liberal Kennedy Democrat, and George W. Bush is not my candidate, but that hardly lessened the anger I felt when I saw your cover story and caricature of Bush. There may well be a serious case to be made against the Texas governor, but THE NEW REPUBLIC didn't make it.

Having been a press aide to Robert F. Kennedy in the presidential campaign of 1968, I remember him often saying, "Politics is the noblest profession of all." I'm smart enough to know that these words sound hollow in the media-dominated climate of today's politics, but some of us still believe them.

GEORGE MITROVICH
San Diego, California

Who's dumber?

TO THE EDITORS:

John F. Kennedy may have had more style than substance, but he was not the lightweight that George W. Bush is ("Party Animals," by Andrew Sullivan, December 20). Although there are some superficial similarities between the two men, owing to the fact that they were both born into rich and powerful political families, that is where the similarities end. For example, while George W. Bush was a C student, Kennedy graduated cum laude from Harvard University. He even wrote a book, *While England Slept*, regarding England's involvement in World War II, which he began while he was in college. While Kennedy was a World War II hero, Bush avoided military service during the Vietnam war by enlisting in the Texas Air National Guard. Kennedy won a Pulitzer Prize for writing *Profiles in Courage*; Bush has all his position papers summarized so he can comprehend complex issues. By the time Kennedy ran for the presidency, he had served for 14 years in the House and Senate. Bush has five years of public service. Furthermore, Kennedy could think on his feet. Even today, his press conferences are remembered for their charm, wit, and substance, while Bush is unable to respond to anything in an intelligent manner without a script.

REBA SHIMANSKY
Brooklyn, New York

McCarthyism

TO THE EDITORS:

In his Washington Diarist, David Plotz gives George Will too much credit for making baseball the game of intellectuals and football the choice of dummies ("Off Base," December 20). The real credit should go to Eugene McCarthy. It was a prevalent idea of his 1968 campaign that people who supported him were not only morally superior but also intellectually above average. McCarthy loved baseball. The contrast was with Robert F. Kennedy, of the famous touch-football clan, and, in the general election, with Whittier

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College second-string footballer Richard Nixon.

STEPHEN B. ADLER
New York, New York

The red and the black

TO THE EDITORS:

Michael Scammell's review of *The Black Book of Communism* ("The Price of an Idea," December 20) is fair and sensitive to the larger and often controversial issues, and Scammell is nuanced and sophisticated in his praise and in his criticism. But, in discussing the "evil nature" of Mao Zedong and, before him, of Lenin and Stalin, Scammell emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility for the course of events. And he goes on to say, "So much for the theories of Marx (and Tolstoy) that history is ruled by impersonal forces, not by individuals." It is a mistake, I think, to limit the choice to either "impersonal forces" or "individuals." Is it not possible, given the evidence Scammell himself presents, that the ideology and the "systems" put in place by Communist revolutionaries attracted the kind of men that Mao and Lenin were and/or reinforced the vicious and bloodthirsty tendencies already in them? Does Scammell really think that if Mao, Lenin, Stalin, and several others of their ilk hadn't been born, there wouldn't have been other croupiers to spin the roulette wheel? Or that the "revolution" and its ideology wouldn't have created them? This is not to say that Stalin and Mao are not guilty of the gravest crimes against humanity or that they had no influence on the particulars of the murderous collectivizations, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution. It is merely to say that impersonal forces and individuals make powerful and often dangerous combinations.

GERALD SORIN
Professor of History
State University of New York, New Paltz

TO THE EDITORS:

Regarding *The Black Book of Communism*, it is worth noting that the respective responsibilities of Stalin and Mao for the terrible famines of 1932–1933 and 1959–1961 differ. In the case of Stalin, the famine was part of a deliberate, punitive war on the peasantry. But Mao had no intent to punish the peasants. The catastrophe was due to the unanticipated consequence of gross mismanagement, which in turn was the product of Mao's campaign to achieve a breakthrough in development by utopian means. Both leaders are responsible. But Stalin's case is one of premeditated murder; Mao's, negligent homicide.

THOMAS P. BERNSTEIN
Professor of East Asian Studies
Columbia University
New York, New York

Disgraceful

TO THE EDITORS:

It seems to me that James Wood has misinterpreted J.M. Coetzee's pessimistic novel *Disgrace* ("Parables and Prizes," December 20).

Of course, Coetzee does want his readers to ponder the connection between David Lurie's affair with a young student in his class and the brutal rape of his daughter, Lucy, by several black men. But Wood thinks that Coetzee is wrong to invite any comparison between David's disgrace and Lucy's: David's disgrace is richly deserved, Wood supposes, while his daughter's is not.

But this is where Wood goes wrong. David's disgrace is not deserved any more than Lucy's is. His only "crime" is to have violated his college's code of political correctness. The charges against him are bogus, the process is rigged, and the panel is stacked with feminists licking their vindictive chops. David knows that any defense will be a waste of time and thus pleads guilty rather than endure the idiocy of "sensitivity training." Wood thinks that David acknowledges his guilt when he apologizes to the girl's father near the end of the book, but, in fact, he only admits that his behavior "lacked lyricism"—a violation of his own aesthetic code, perhaps, but hardly grounds for dismissal.

Disgrace depicts two people facing parallel forms of racism and oppression in post-apartheid South Africa. They are hopelessly outnumbered and, in any event, much too guilt-ridden to defend themselves against their self-righteous antagonists. The most they can do is try to salvage some small amount of dignity.

KEITH W. ACKER
Cromwell, Connecticut

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Too Proud

IN A WORLD in which there are no obvious, imminent threats to American security, in a country whose leaders celebrate their unparalleled prosperity and their status as the "only superpower," it is not surprising that the electorate does not worry much about foreign affairs. And it is not surprising that the presidential candidates either repeat safe, traditional clichés about the need to increase America's military might, preserve its power, and frustrate all challengers (in the case of the Republicans) or say almost nothing at all (in the case of the Democrats).

Behind this combination of routine and silence lies a consensus. That consensus complacently envisages that America will remain preeminent in all the different realms of world power and that it will remain a model for other countries. It relies on the traditional way of analyzing world affairs: as a competition among states in which the United States has to keep watching potential rivals and "rogue states" lest they sneak up on it and do it harm. At the same time, it is optimistic about the benefits of globalization, which is supposed to spread prosperity around the globe and push countries toward democracy.

There is something wrong with these assumptions. The traditional game of state competition goes on, of course. But many of the dangers the world now faces stem not from conflicts between countries but from conflicts within them. Many states today cause trouble and spread chaos not because of their strength but because of their internal weaknesses—the ethnic, religious, or political conflicts that tear apart their flimsy structures or the private or public gangsterism that erodes their civil society.

In addition, we now live in a world that has more than just the "society" of states that the traditional realist framework imagines. Today's world also contains a transnational society of businessmen and financiers, and even a transnational society of activists—for causes ranging from human rights to terrorism—who often succeed in dictating parts of their governments' agendas. To whom such groups are accountable is unclear, to say the least. Finally the peoples of the world tend to take their fates into their own hands. International law, in what amounts to a revolution, has been giving them rights against their governments. It is they who destroy states, overthrow regimes, and benefit from the new information technology. They are increasingly beyond any government's control. Such a world is much harder to manage than our presidential candidates realize, and they are naïve to believe America can manage it alone, no matter how great our power. In particular, America cannot alone manage the downside of globalization. What is being globalized, after all, is capitalism, and, as in the industrializing countries of the nineteenth century, the merits of capitalism come with many economic, social, and political flaws. The gaps between rich and poor countries and between the cosmopolitan elites and the working middle and lower classes are increasing, breeding backlashes against open borders, migrating capital, and ever-shifting jobs. As our inflated stock market suggests, capitalism has not learned how to avoid speculative bubbles or how to emancipate the economy from the vagaries of the banks. In recent years, capitalism has spread to countries where corruption is triumphant and the rule of law is weak, and that, too, increases the instability of the global system.

Americans are only dimly aware of the degree to which people outside their nation's borders consider globalization to be an American construct. It has an American script, and it carries with it American culture and American preferences and dislikes (for instance, of economic and social rights). At a time when the concern for group identity leads a few countries to join forces (as in the European Union) and many more to seek their own separate niches, resentment of globalization quickly turns into resentment of America.

This is why the mantra of this campaign—that America, as the sole superpower, may occasionally need partners but need never submit to any higher authority—is dangerously simplistic. Unilateralism, which means treating others as instruments in a concert with an American conductor, will inevitably lead Washington's partners, critics, and foes to increase, and perhaps combine, their resistance to its will. It is true that in many countries one can find admiration for American inventiveness, dynamism, and flexibility. This may mean, as Harvard Dean Joseph Nye has often written, that the United States enjoys a reservoir of "soft power." But the admirers often want to borrow from America precisely because they hope to grow strong enough not to have to submit to American might.

It is true, as many Republican candidates say on the campaign trail, that crises in "insignificant" parts of the world are no reason to squander American power. But it does not follow that the United States must either act alone or not at all. A world of Rwandas or Bosnias, with their mass graves and refugee camps, would not be livable. We cannot afford to look away and husband all our strength for potential great-power military challenges that may not come, or to use it solely against "rogues" and terrorists who turn out to be awfully hard to eliminate.

We must instead return to the world as it really is: a global struggle between the forces (technological and economic) that unify it and those (political and cultural) which keep it fragmented. And we must realize that the only way to cope with the liabilities of both is to strengthen and reform international institutions—something that the Republicans vehemently oppose and the Democrats are too afraid to suggest. Whether it is human rights, the environment, weapons of mass destruction, international health and labor standards, banking systems and capital movements, trade disputes, or coping with refugees, the task is the same. The world needs a network of institutions that can monitor, supervise, and enforce global standards of fairness and protection. Such institutions will require countries to pool their sovereignties, and they will require cooperation between public officials and the world's increasingly powerful nongovernmental organizations. The U.N. Security Council should have at its disposal forces ready to intervene to prevent or stop dangerous or genocidal conflict. And, while the United States seems proud of its habit of never considering what solutions others may have found to familiar problems (has anyone mentioned recently that there are gays in the military everywhere but in the United States and that this has not led to the disintegration of foreign armies?), some of the institutional innovations developed by the Europeans since 1950—such as the supranational European Commission of the EU that prepares and executes the decisions taken by the Councils of Ministers—might be models for an empowered United Nations.

The greatest danger to America is neither Vladimir Putin nor Saddam Hussein nor Osama Bin Ladin. It is hubris.

STANLEY HOFFMANN

STANLEY HOFFMANN is a University Professor at Harvard.

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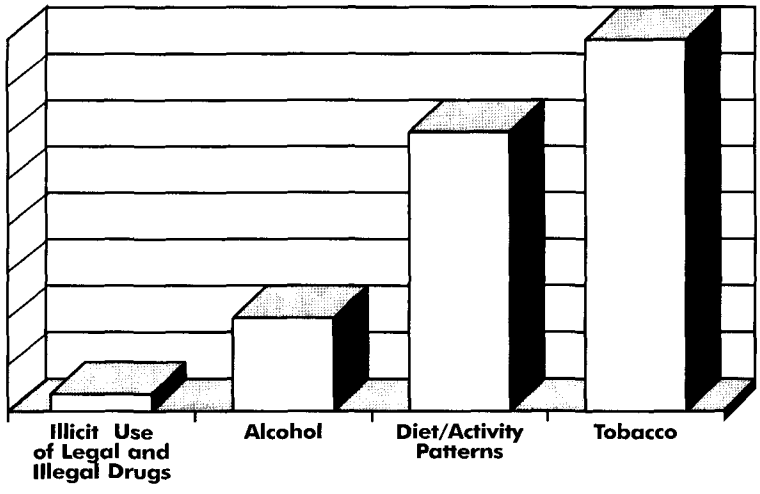
Let's Keep America's Drug Problem in Perspective

Estimated Causes of Preventable Deaths*



- 5 times as many people die from Alcohol each year than from illicit drugs and misuse of legal pharmaceuticals
- 15 times as many people die from poor diets and activity patterns
- 20 times as many people die from tobacco

Why arrest 1.6 million people each year for drugs?

Does jailing drug users make more sense than jailing over weight people and smokers?

* Estimated deaths attributed to: Illicit Use of Legal and Illegal Drugs - 20,000; Alcohol - 100,000; Diet/Activity Patterns - 300,000; Tobacco - 400,000.

Source: *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Statistics Source Book 1998 citing 1990 figures.* (Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services). Pg. 218

Common Sense for Drug Policy, Kevin B. Zeese, President
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Father Knows Best

BILL CLINTON HAS been accused of a lot of dark deeds over the past seven years, but it broke new ground for a mainstream Republican presidential candidate to accuse him of human sacrifice. In the January 6 Republican debate in Durham, New Hampshire, Steve Forbes said the Immigration and Naturalization Service's decision to send Elián González back to his father in Cuba "is Bill Clinton's human sacrifice to Fidel Castro, and it's a disgrace."

Actually, the Clinton administration's action was the opposite of a disgrace: it was a shocking act of principle. How often does this administration put process ahead of politics, especially when it comes to Cuba, especially in an election year? The Clintonites had every temptation to take the decision out of the INS's hands and keep Elián in the United States, thus boosting the Democrats' and Al Gore's chances in Cuban-heavy Florida and New Jersey this fall. But, for whatever reason—because they didn't want to spark a crisis with Castro, because they didn't want to set a precedent, or maybe even because they felt that due process mattered—the administration resisted.

So the INS went to Cuba and interviewed Elián's father (his mother, you may remember, died trying to make it to the United States). Based on his testimony, the testimony of others, and documents attesting to the father's deep involvement in his son's life, the INS decided that Elián should return to live with him rather than remain with his great-uncle in Miami. Of course, the INS's information wasn't unassailable: no one living in a country like Cuba can truly speak freely. But, given the evidence pointing to a strong and sincere bond between parent and child, the INS would have had to deny Elián's father the right to custody of his child simply because he lives in a dictatorship. To do so would have violated both American law (which stresses family reunification) and elementary morality.

The Republican demagoguery began as soon as the INS decision was announced. Representative Dan Burton, chair of the House Government Reform Committee, subpoenaed the boy in the hope of keeping him from returning to Cuba. Senator Jesse Helms called on Congress to make Elián an American citizen. Texas Governor George W. Bush said Elián's father should visit America and reconsider. Gary Bauer said the boy should stay in the United States. Senator John McCain fulminated that "[Elián's] mother sacrificed her life in order that her son could have freedom, and we're talking about parenthood."

Well, yes, we are, but the Republicans can hardly be surprised. For the GOP, after all, parenthood is supposed to be an unshakable core value. Bush recently set up a $400,000 Texas Fatherhood Initiative to encourage Texas men "to be responsible fathers and support them as they learn to make invaluable contributions to the lives of Texas children." Bauer, who was president of the Family Research Council before hitting the campaign trail, has said, "We need to make sure that every child has an adult that's crazy about him." Bauer is also on record celebrating the power of family over any regime: "No government can shape a nation the way strong families can." Except for, evidently, Castro's government.

Democrats, on the other hand, are running for cover. Bill Bradley has been mealymouthed, saying, "I thought Elián González should stay in the United States. But I'm not going to second-guess the INS." Gore, playing to Miami, said the case should go to federal court, expressing doubt that the INS has the "experience and expertise to really address a question like that." (And, indeed, a Miami judge has scheduled a hearing for March 6, delaying Elián's return, which was to have taken place by mid-January.) This from the vice president of an administration that has pioneered a policy of making asylum cases the purview of INS administrators rather than federal judges. Do you think Gore would say the same thing if Elián were Haitian?

None of this is to imply that Florida's Cuban exiles—and the rest of America's citizens—don't have good reason to despise Castro's regime. They do, and America should keep up its pressure on Castro until it sees substantial moves toward democracy and human rights. But to conclude that the nature of a person's government is what invariably determines the quality of his life—to put Elián's freedom to live in the United States above his right to live with his father—is to make politics a synonym for life. And that, ironically, is a signature idea of the totalitarianism the Cuban exiles so passionately oppose. ■

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PHILANTHROPIC TOOL: When you have as much money as Steve Forbes does, it must be hard to keep track of it all. How else can one explain some of the donations made in recent years by his family's philanthropy, the Forbes Foundation—donations at odds with the presidential candidate's ultraconservative posturing? While Forbes has portrayed himself as champion of the unborn, from 1990 to 1998 the foundation that bears his name gave $25,000 to Planned Parenthood, the leading U.S. abortion provider. Similarly, although Forbes has attacked the United Nations as "an international porkbarrel operation" unworthy of U.S. back dues, in 1996 the foundation gave $10,000 to the Business Council for the United Nations, a stridently pro-U.N. lobbying group. What's more, this group has co-signed letters with Planned Parenthood and others demanding that the United States pay its dues "in full and without burdensome conditions," like the restrictions on funding to international family-planning programs that pro-life conservatives have repeatedly demanded. Even the foundation's supposedly apolitical choices are a little odd. Since 1994 it has given more than $25,000 to the Brooklyn Museum of Art—the very same museum whose controversial "Sensation" show prompted Forbes to appear before the Christian Coalition last October and denounce the government for "subsidiz[ing] assaults on religion." To be fair, Forbes has a defense for all of this. In 1996, when asked about the foundation's donations to Planned Parenthood from 1990 to 1994, he explained that the foundation's largesse is subject to the political interests of several family members, not just his. This line appears to have assuaged some of Forbes's anti-abortion supporters. A recent Manchester, New Hampshire, *Union Leader* editorial, for instance, excused Forbes for the "old donation" to Planned Parenthood, apparently unaware that the gifts continue up through 1998, the most recent year for which data is available. Forbes, naturally, has not corrected the *Union Leader*. Still, we can see why Forbes has grown so hostile to the pro-choice groups with whom he once sympathized. After all, unlike many conservatives at whom Forbes has thrown his money, Planned Parenthood still hasn't endorsed him for president.

WE NEVER THOUGHT WE'D SAY IT: There are times when the paranoid are really being followed. And there are times when Pat Buchanan is actually correct in denouncing the cabals of the establishment. Take, for instance, his crusade against the Commission on Presidential Debates, which ruled on January 6 that presidential candidates must win an average of 15 percent in five nationally recognized polls to participate in this fall's debates. Buchanan, who said the chance to participate in the general-election debates was one of the main reasons he left the GOP, branded the ruling a "Beltway conspiracy by the two establishment parties to corner the market forever on the presidency of the United States." And he has a point: the commission's co-chairmen, Frank Fahrenkopf Jr. and Paul G. Kirk Jr., are past chairmen of the Republican National Committee and the Democratic National Committee, respectively. In fact, of the commission's eleven members, eight have explicit affiliations with either the Democratic or the Republican party. The commission's history also makes its decision a bit suspect: it was established in 1987, when the two parties wrested control of the debates from the nonpartisan League of Women Voters. At the commission's first press conference, its chairman declared his intent to exclude third parties. This bias was officially challenged in 1996, when Ross Perot sued the commission after it refused to allow him to participate in the Clinton–Dole debates, citing his lack of a "realistic" chance of winning the election. Perot complained that some of the commission's requirements, such as attaining the blessing of a select group of journalists, were unfairly subjective. Perot lost the case but won the ensuing p.r. battle, and the commission crafted new standards that were "clear," "emphatically nonpartisan," and "predictable." They scrapped the survey of journalists and turned instead to the 15 percent barrier. But, in raising the hurdle so high, they've once again come across as undemocratic. The fairest move would be to lower the requirement. Five percent, the level at which candidates receive public funds, is probably too low. But ten percent seems about right. It would weed out the wackier fringe candidates but leave the door open for serious, substantial candidates able to broaden and enhance the discussion. And it would deprive Buchanan of the one gift conspiracy mongers should never be granted: the privilege of being right.

AGRO-VATING: Of all the distortions brought about by Iowa's "first in the nation" caucus, perhaps the most noxious is the notion that the farmer has a unique claim to federal largesse. In fact, the hallowed Washington tradition of shoveling billions at American agriculture has no decent justification at all. Why is the failure of a family farm worthy of federal intervention when the failure of, say, a family restaurant is considered routine? It is not an endorsement of pure laissez-faire to insist that the government should not protect favored industries from the natural consequences of the free market. That no politician is willing to say so owes much to the abiding power of the agrarian myth (which evokes the moral superiority of the hardy yeoman) but also the need for prospective presidents to tailor their views to the interests of Iowans. This quadrennial pandering reached a new low in last week's Democratic debate. Al Gore and Bill Bradley vied for the most thunderous denunciation of the 1996 Freedom to Farm Act, a law that laid the groundwork for phasing out federal crop price supports. Gore declared that "it's time to get rid of almost all of the so-called Freedom to Farm Act, because it's been the freedom to fail, and it's not working." Bradley, not to be outdone, echoed, "Freedom to Farm failed. There was supposed to be a safety net." It's true that Freedom to Farm hasn't worked as planned, but not in the way the Democrats suggest. It hasn't worked because, in two of the three years since voting to phase out crop subsidies, Congress has lavished billions of dollars in special grants to farmers. If only Freedom to Farm *had* been "freedom to fail." In the rest of the economy, that's known as capitalism.

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SHORTSIGHTED: Last week the Clinton administration asked the Supreme Court not to review a federal appeals court's ruling that the Alabama prison system could exclude all HIV-positive inmates from recreational, educational, religious, work-release, and more than 70 other programs where they might mix with the rest of the prison population. Given the "violence that is an inescapable part of prison life," the solicitor general's brief suggested, Alabama could legitimately conclude that HIV-positive inmates posed a "significant risk" of transmitting to other prisoners the virus that causes AIDS and therefore could be segregated without violating federal laws prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities. The administration's position is surprising, to say the least, given its unsuccessful effort last spring to persuade the Supreme Court to enlarge legal protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The administration even argued (unsuccessfully) that uncorrected myopia should be considered a disability under federal law. Which raises an obvious question: Why is the Clinton administration less concerned about discrimination against HIV-positive prisoners than about discrimination against people who refuse to wear glasses?

ALL THE RUMORS FIT TO PRINT: By now, most sensible commentators realize that the "scandal" of John McCain's letter asking the Federal Communications Commission to make a decision (not decide a certain way, mind you, simply make a decision) about one of his contributors is no scandal at all. Members of Congress do worse every day. So why did *The New York Times* play it on page one, dignifying it for other papers and the TV networks? We don't know, but it's in character. Except for one flattering *New York Times Magazine* story two years ago, the *Times*' coverage of McCain has been relentlessly hostile. The paper dignified the whispering campaign against McCain's mental health by prominently featuring thinly sourced rumors started by McCain's GOP rivals. When an anti-McCain editorial ran in an Arizona newspaper, the *Times* devoted an article to it. (Does the *Times* cover anti-Bush editorials in Texas newspapers?) And the gray lady ran, also on page one, a story claiming that McCain was disliked in Arizona—sourced, if one read it carefully, to his main home-state rival, Governor Jane Dee Hull, a George W. Bush supporter. Maybe it's time to start a few unsubstantiated rumors about the mental health of *Times* political editors.

OF THE MAKING OF BOOKS: We are delighted to announce the appearance of these magisterial books by our contributing editors and contributors: *Cardano's Cosmos: The Worlds and Works of a Renaissance Astrologer*, by Anthony Grafton (Harvard University Press); *Feeding the Eye*, by Anne Hollander (Farrar, Straus and Giroux); and *In Love with Night: The American Romance with Robert Kennedy*, by Ronald Steel (Simon and Schuster). Also, Merrill Peterson, a distinguished American historian at the University of Virginia, has recently published *Coming of Age with* THE NEW REPUBLIC, *1938–1950*, a tale of his intellectual development and our own. We are flattered by the association. ■

VINT'S WEEK

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Golan Heights Dispatch

Acrophilia

By Yossi Klein Halevi

With its photographs of local waterfalls and its posters advertising a tree-planting ceremony and a cherry-picking festival, the storefront office of the Golan Residents Committee in the town of Katzrin looks more like a travel agency than the headquarters of a protest movement. And it is precisely as a travel agent that Dimitri Apartzev intends to stop Israel from withdrawing from the Golan Heights.

As head of the Golan Residents Committee's "Russian desk," Apartzev, a 30-year-old biology teacher, is in charge of bringing thousands of his fellow Russian immigrants on subsidized tours of the Golan. His goal is to convince them to vote no in Ehud Barak's as yet theoretical national referendum on handing back the Golan to Syria. According to Apartzev, it's an almost absurdly easy job. "All I have to do is take them to a lookout and point to the Galilee below, and they make my speech for me," he says in his Russian-accented Hebrew. "Russians were taught that if you take territory in a defensive war, it's yours, period. Look at the Kuril Islands, which Russia occupied from Japan in World War II. And how can you compare the Kuril Islands with the importance of the Golan for Israel? Russians also know from personal experience that you can't trust an agreement with a dictator. For us, giving up strategic territory and our most important water sources to the Syrian dictatorship that attacked Israel three times turns the world on its head."

Since November, Apartzev has brought more than 10,000 immigrants to visit the Golan. Backed by American Jewish donors, he intends to bring 150,000 more in the coming months. He also enjoys the support of Israel's two major Russian parties, Yisrael b'Aliyah and Yisrael Beiteinu. "Veteran Israelis are understandably exhausted from living with the conflict," says Apartzev. "We immigrants have been given the historical responsibility of saving Israel from a fatal mistake."

Right now, the question of handing the Golan back to Syria divides Israel down the middle. According to a recent poll in the newspaper *Yediot Aharonot*, 51 percent of Israelis oppose total withdrawal, while 45 percent support it. In Israel's predictably tribal politics, Arab Israelis are overwhelmingly for withdrawal, Orthodox Jews overwhelmingly against; middle-class Ashkenazim largely for, working-class Sephardim largely against. That deadlock makes the volatile Russian vote crucial. The three prime ministers elected since 1992 all owed their victories to the Russian vote. And polls show that about 70 percent of the immigrants oppose withdrawal.

Yossi Klein Halevi is a senior writer for *The Jerusalem Report*.

In other words, it's entirely possible that the Shepherdstown negotiations will lead to a gala deal-signing ceremony on the White House lawn, after which Ehud Barak will come home to hear his fellow Israelis say no.

Part of what makes handing back the Golan so unpalatable is the Syrians themselves, whom Israelis trust least among their neighbors. Israeli leftists who excuse Palestinian belligerency as a legitimate response to occupation offer no similar excuses for the Syrians. The Palestinians are underdogs; the Syrians are bullies. "Is it possible to make a viable peace with people like this?" wrote veteran peace activist Meron Benvenisti in the newspaper *Ha'aretz* after Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara refused to shake Barak's hand at the White House. Amos Oz, the novelist and peace-camp spokesman, told an interviewer that the Syrians "think they can get the Golan and send us a receipt by fax. That's not good enough for me."

Barak's problem of Israeli antipathy for Syria is compounded by the Israeli love for the Golan. In a recent interview, Barak tried to downplay the Golan's emotional significance, which he pointedly contrasted with the historical and religious resonance of the biblical West Bank. Yet Israelis have emotionally annexed the Golan not because of its excavated ancient synagogues but because of its tangible place in their lives. Though only 39 miles long and 16 miles wide, the Golan passes in Israel for expanse. It is at once Israel's front line and its playground, where Israelis go to hike and ride jeeps and escape their sense of claustrophobia. Ceding the most beautiful part of Israel to Hafez al-Assad seems to many an aesthetic crime. "My hand, my heart and also my head are not capable of returning the blooming and thriving Golan Heights to a miserable dictator of a failing country which has nothing besides its army," the left-wing writer Amos Kenan recently wrote in *Yediot Aharonot*.

True, Israelis felt a similar passion for the expanses of the Sinai desert, which Israel nevertheless returned to Egypt in 1982. But today's situation is different, and not only because Assad is no Anwar Sadat. Signs at the entrance to each of the Golan's 33 settlements announce how long the community has existed "on the ground." The average age of the settlements is around 30 years, and in Israel, itself only 51, that is longevity. By contrast, Israel's town in the Sinai desert, Yamit, was scarcely seven years old when it was evacuated.

On a Golan hilltop overlooking the Sea of Galilee, settlers have erected a large protest tent. On one wall hang sheets covered with inscriptions by Israeli vacationers who frequent the site. The power of the messages is their simplicity. "The Golan, our most beautiful place." "The Golan is our home." "The Golan is my home." "My Golan."

For much of the public, it is not just the Golan's landscapes but also its settlers that represent the "beautiful Israel." The Golan's Jewish society is what Israel was supposed to be: crime-free, ecologically responsible, and free from the ethnic and religious tensions tearing apart Israel "below." The Golan's 17,000 Jews are widely admired as the last repository of secular, pioneering Israel. This is not the obstinate West Bank: in the most recent election, Barak won 57 percent of the Golan's Jewish vote. The Golan's 17,000 Druze Arabs are divided between those preferring Syrian rule and those

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favoring the Israelis. Tellingly, the Hebrew press doesn't call the Golan's Jews "settlers" but "inhabitants," just like normal Israelis. "I might have thought twice about moving to the West Bank," says Apartzev. "But, when I moved to Katzrin, it didn't occur to me once that this was disputed territory."

But for all the sentimentality, the Golan's fate will probably be determined by the hard questions of water and security. The Sea of Galilee, which supplies a third of Israel's water, is fed by streams from the Golan. (Another third of Israel's water comes from the West Bank and could fall under Palestinian control; the final third, located beneath the crowded coastal plain, is endangered by pollution and overpumping.) To compensate for the loss of the Golan, Barak will likely call for a regional desalination plant. But Israelis are highly sensitive about risking their safest water source, especially after a drought only recently ended by winter rains.

In the security debate, ex-general Barak, backed by most of the defense establishment, has the advantage. If Barak says that the army can defend Israel without the Golan and that territory isn't decisive in an age of missiles and satellites, most Israelis will probably believe him. But, while Barak's solutions are technical, the settlers' message links security to Israel's basic sense of itself. "American soldiers will sit on the Golan to protect us from Assad, and Assad's soldiers will sit in Lebanon to protect us from the [Islamic] Hezbollah," mocks Golan activist Oded Porat. "Zionism is about Jewish self-reliance. A people not willing to defend itself won't survive in the long term."

BARAK'S STRATEGISTS REMAIN confident. They claim that a majority will certainly vote yes when they see the benefits of a real deal: the safe withdrawal of Israeli soldiers from Lebanon, the acceptance of Israel by most of the Middle East, and—for Barak the crucial part of the deal—state-of-the-art U.S. weaponry that will substantially bolster Israel's military superiority. They point to the 1982 Sinai withdrawal and the ongoing withdrawal from the West Bank as proof that Israeli society, pragmatic and postideological, will pay the price for regional stability. Even wary Israelis, the strategists believe, will be tempted by the side benefits of a treaty with Syria, such as Barak's promise to reduce Israel's punishing three-year military service by six months if an agreement is signed.

Barak is vulnerable, though, on one of his key promises: that the deal with Syria will boost the Israeli economy, which is burdened by nine percent unemployment. According to Israeli press reports, Barak intends to ask Washington for an astonishing $17 billion in military assistance and several billion more for evacuating settlements. Golan activists will soon begin lobbying the U.S. Congress against Barak's request. Meanwhile, pro-Golan editorialists are warning the Israeli public that the Republican Congress will almost certainly reject the massive aid package, leaving the Israeli taxpayer to pay for the pleasure of ceding the Golan.

If all his other arguments fail, Barak has a weapon of last resort: fear. He has already hinted that a humiliated Syria, armed with Scud missiles and biological weapons, will feel impelled to attack Israel, perhaps joining forces with Iran and Iraq, if it doesn't retrieve the Golan. Reject my Syria deal, Barak will tell the Israeli public, and you will face the most devastating war in the country's history. Golan leaders believe they can convince a majority of Israelis that a deal with Syria will be a sham peace, but they are less confident of defeating Barak if he tries to sell an agreement through fear instead of hope. Given the way Israelis feel about their neighbor to the north and the way they feel about the Golan, Barak may have to use Syrian malevolence to convince his countrymen to give their most detested enemy the most beloved part of their country. ■

What does John Engler have against school choice?

Strange Choice

By MIKE CATANZARO

MICHIGAN GOVERNOR JOHN ENGLER is widely viewed as a bold conservative. His innovative responses to vexing issues like welfare have made him one of the Republican Party's rising stars. Indeed, some pundits predict Engler's record will land him the number-two spot on the GOP's presidential ticket this November.

So it's curious that Engler is strenuously opposing what many Republicans consider their most innovative and politically appealing issue: education vouchers. In Michigan, pro-voucher forces are well on their way toward gathering enough signatures to put a voucher initiative—enthusiastically named "Kids First! Yes!"—on the state ballot in November. The initiative, if approved, would repeal the Michigan state constitution's prohibition on public funding of private or parochial schools. It would also give children in the state's worst school districts "Opportunity Scholarships" of $3,100 (about half the current state expenditure per pupil) that could be used at private schools.

But, in Engler's assessment, the initiative is "dumb," and he's intent on scuttling it. "If the [voucher initiative] makes the Michigan ballot next year," Engler said on January 6, "you can count on my determined opposition to it." There is "not a lot of good data out on how well the voucher system works," he has said.

Engler insists he still supports vouchers in principle—he just opposes Kids First! Although a Mitchell Research Poll recently showed that 58 percent of Michigan voters back the initiative, Engler dourly predicts it "will eventually be defeated"—a defeat that, according to Engler's spokesman, John Truscott, "would set back the cause of vouchers for at least the next ten years."

But that's just Engler's public explanation. His real reason for opposing the initiative—the reason he has privately given

MIKE CATANZARO is the political reporter for Robert Novak.

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to fellow Republicans—is political and perverse. Stated syllogistically, it goes: The school-choice initiative will induce African Americans, who support it in fairly large majorities, and union members, who oppose it in fairly large majorities, to flock to the polls in November. Because most blacks and union members are Democrats, they will vote for Democratic candidates, which is bad for Republicans. Therefore, the voucher initiative must be stopped.

Engler isn't the only Michigan Republican to subscribe to this convoluted theory. Senator Spencer Abraham, who could lose his tough reelection battle against Democratic Representative Debbie Stabenow if there's high turnout among black and union voters, also opposes the initiative.

But most Michigan Republicans don't buy Engler's turnout argument. They don't just think Kids First! is good policy; they're also not as pessimistic about the party's chances among blacks—chances they believe the GOP could enhance if it enthusiastically backed vouchers. At its conference in Mackinac in September, the state GOP's 16-member issues committee unanimously endorsed the voucher plan. Then, in mid-November, state party chairman Betsy DeVos—who has endorsed Kids First! and whose husband is its co-chairman—tabled a vote on the initiative at the party's full committee meeting in an effort to avoid an embarrassing public fracas between the governor and his party.

MICHIGAN REPUBLICANS ARE puzzled by Engler's stance. They say he sounds like his former rival, ex-Governor Jim Blanchard, whom Engler defeated in 1990—thanks in no small part to Engler's support of vouchers. During the campaign, Engler's education proposal, "The Future of Michigan Education," called for "introduc[ing] competition into our education system." "Right now," Engler wrote, "public schools are a monopoly. There is no choice. There is no freedom." Once in office, Engler was a vocal supporter of vouchers. As recently as April, when Engler first reviewed the Kids First! plan, he called it "innovative." And George W. Bush's education platform, which Engler helped craft in early 1999, includes a call for vouchers. "I'm surprised that Governor Engler is opposing this, especially since he's been such a firm supporter of choice in the past," laments the Reverend Eddie Edwards, who sits on the board of Kids First!

What most troubles Michigan Republicans, though, is Engler's apparent refusal to take on a controversial issue. They fondly recall how Engler was roundly criticized as "cold-hearted" for his welfare-reform plan, which cut off state assistance to those able to work, but still won reelection handily in 1996. "When he proposed an end to welfare, he never blinked, despite the attacks," says a former Engler aide. "In the end, he won, and was rewarded for it at the polls." As for the teachers' unions, Republicans say, Engler didn't flinch from taking them on before. In 1994, just two years before his reelection campaign, the governor proposed a school-funding plan that made him the Michigan Education Association's public enemy number one.

So what explains Engler's insistence on playing it safe today? Some Michigan Republicans attribute it to selfishness. "I think John Engler has his sights on higher things, so he's doing what he can to be cautious," laments one state Republican official. But, ironically, even on that score Engler may be making a mistake. Both likely Republican nominees, George W. Bush and John McCain, have yet to fully prove their conservative bona fides. And the need to do so will certainly influence their choice of running mate. How would it look to choose a governor who is keeping one of conservatism's best ideas from ever seeing the light of day? ■

Campaign Journal

Crazy Like a Fox

By MICHELLE COTTLE

AS THE PRESIDENTIAL contenders furiously debate their way across the early-primary states, a handful of basic questions are emerging: Can John McCain make George W. Bush look reckless on the tax-cut issue? Can Bill Bradley explain his heath care plan without putting the viewing public to sleep? And, perhaps most compellingly, precisely when is former U.N. ambassador and mad-dog Republican Alan Keyes going to have a massive aneurysm?

For a moment, it looked as if it might happen right there onstage during the first Republican debate of the new year, held January 6 at the University of New Hampshire. With an oratorical panache exceeded only by the volume of his diatribe, the ever outspoken ambassador-turned-radio-personality unleashed the full fury of his ultraconservative frustrations on an unsuspecting public. Keyes railed against "the radical homosexual agenda" (as well as his fellow Republicans' unwillingness to rail against it), denounced McCain for once saying he liked the rock group Nine Inch Nails, and entered into a near shrieking match with debate moderator Tim Russert. Convinced that the political-chat-show host was favoring the two front-runners, Keyes refused to yield the floor to other questions or candidates. "Excuse me, I'm not done," he barked, repeatedly and insistently charging that "you let the *other* folks finish." Keyes's fellow debaters tried to step in, gently (and later not so gently) urging their agitated colleague to yield.

It was an eye-popping performance—one that would send your ordinary campaign into a frenzy of spin-doctoring damage control. But Keyes's campaign is not ordinary. Bright and early the next morning, his New Hampshire staff, in its shabby little headquarters in downtown Manchester, was in high spirits, buoyed up by a wave of post-debate messages of support. Calls were rolling in from folks wanting ten, 20, 30 campaign signs to post in their neighborhoods. State Director Rob Thompson boasted that already that morning he had taken calls from a McCain supporter, a Bauer

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supporter, and a Forbes supporter all looking to switch their allegiance to Keyes. Far from being disheartened or embarrassed, the staffers considered the debate a major victory.

Strangely enough, they may be right. Despite the candidate's reputation among many mainstream political watchers as a raving right-wing nut job, Keyes's outraged, hard-line conservatism plays pretty well in the Granite State. Sure, the guy has no shot at actually *winning* the New Hampshire primary: with only two weeks to go, he's still polling in the single digits, at least 25 points behind McCain and Bush. But Keyes isn't really competing in the GOP primary; he's competing in the *conservative* primary, against Steve Forbes and Gary Bauer. And, in that contest, he's doing remarkably well. A recent poll of New Hampshire Republicans showed that Keyes's support had doubled in the past month from four to eight percent, putting him a mere four points behind Forbes, whose numbers remained flat despite his campaign's lavish spending on TV ads, phone banks, and mass mailings. Moreover, on the national scene, the latest Zogby and *Newsweek* polls show Keyes leading Forbes by a sliver (five to four and five to three, respectively)—quite an achievement considering that Forbes has doled out more than $20 million, in contrast to Keyes's $2.4 million. Similarly, poor Bauer, stuck at one or two percent in most polls, has spent more than three times what Keyes has.

CHRIS GALL

Keyes's comparative rise illustrates just how marginalized the fight for the right has become in this year's Republican primary. Forbes, after all, was supposed to be Bush's most serious contender, the well-funded standard bearer of the party's ideological base. But Republicans want a win and they want it bad, prompting hordes of religious and social conservatives to hold their noses and line up behind the Anointed One, George W. This, in turn, leaves hard-liners like Bauer, Keyes, and Forbes fighting over the fringiest of the far-right fringe—folks for whom "political pragmatism" is a damnable phrase and ideological zealotry a sign of good breeding. They are, in other words, Alan Keyes's kind of people.

Trudy Remillard is the sort of voter about whom the Keyes camp dreams. A 75-year-old grandmother living on a fixed income, Remillard was, until a few weeks ago, a Gary Bauer fan. But then a brochure from the Keyes campaign arrived in her mailbox. Intrigued, Remillard contacted the New Hampshire office for more information, checked out Keyes in the debates, and voilà—a true believer was born. Now Remillard has Keyes bumper stickers on her car and a Keyes 2000 sign in her tiny front yard, and she is actively recruiting friends and family to the cause.

A social conservative who appreciates Keyes's anti-abortion stance ("He's a respecter of life"), Remillard is even more impressed by his outspokenness against big government. "It's grown out of proportion," she asserts with ferocity. "It's getting into all of our private lives. It's outrageous." With her wispy white curls bobbling above enormous wire-rimmed glasses, Remillard argues the wisdom of her candidate's positions on everything from the United Nations ("They're getting to the point where they're controlling us") to parental rights ("The government is trying to tell us not to correct our kids, except for maybe saying they need a 'time out.' But if your kids are being terribly sassy and defiant, they should have a slap"). But the pièce de résistance is Keyes's pledge to abolish the income tax. "He recognizes that the IRS is unconstitutional," swoons Remillard. "He wants to go back to what the Founding Fathers wanted.... We were so much better off at the time of the Founding Fathers."

Though best-known for his stance on social issues like abortion and gay marriage, Keyes's conservative positions on the economy and on sovereignty—both national and personal—are the hot selling points in libertarian New Hampshire. (T-shirts distributed by the campaign bear the slogan NO INCOME TAX across the back, and campaign mailings include an audiocassette titled "Liberty IS the 2nd Amendment.") Rob Thompson breaks New Hampshire down into three basic voting sectors, none of which is primarily concerned with social issues. The southeast corner is the most socially conservative. But even there the top issue is "school choice," then "pro-life and taxes." For voters in the middle sector, which starts in the northeast corner and cuts a diag-

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onal swath across cities such as Manchester and Nashua, "taxes are first, then Second Amendment, then pro-life." And, in the large chunk of western and northwestern New Hampshire that Thompson calls "Buchananworld," the campaign is focusing on "sovereignty, tax, then school choice. Pro-life isn't really an issue here."

But it's not issues per se that have fueled Keyes's rise; it's the attitudes of conservatives this time around. Many right-wingers are appalled that the GOP primary has become a contest between "compassionate conservative" George W. and McCain, who says Bush's tax plan isn't compassionate enough. Not since before Barry Goldwater has the GOP's moderate establishment so marginalized the far right. The wingers, suspecting the fix is in, are prone to hostility and paranoia. Keyes's personality—aggressive, uncontrollable, quick to imagine conspiracies (racism, he claims, is the reason he's not being taken more seriously by the political media)—neatly fits the mood. Remillard, for one, thought his performance in the New Hampshire debate was top-notch: "He was assertive, but he needs to be assertive or he won't be heard." If he didn't jump into the fray, she notes, "he'd be laid back and amount to zero."

More than a few New Hampshire conservatives share this opinion—which may help explain the consistently abysmal poll numbers of Bauer, who is arguably as intelligent and conservative as Keyes but infinitely less ... rambunctious. Remillard can't really articulate why she prefers Keyes over Bauer, other than that Keyes seems to have "a lot more concern for the people. He seems to be the one who has the most interest in doing what's right for the country rather than just being president." Keyes staffer Eric Maurer—a true believer since 1996—insists Keyes "is the one that has the power to change people's minds.... I'm much more convinced that Keyes believes what he says—and what he says is better, too." Thompson asserts that Keyes has a clear edge over Bauer on the tax issue (Bauer supports a flat income tax as opposed to total abolition) but that the real difference is "the way the message is communicated." In other words, lunacy sells.

EVEN SUPPORTERS OF the animatronic Forbes are susceptible to Keyes's bad-boy charm. On debate night, Keyes's "take no prisoners" attitude elicited cheers from the 90 or so Forbes fans gathered in the University of New Hampshire dining hall to watch the program. Although the Forbes folks likely view Keyes primarily as an unwelcome competitor, these supporters seemed to appreciate his refusal to let himself—or his conservative agenda—be ignored. (The silent Forbes, by comparison, seemed only marginally more animated and engaged than the podium behind which he stood.)

Keyes staffers are convinced they have the right messenger to carry the conservative word to the people of New Hampshire—and the nation. To know Alan, as they see it, is to love him. (As for the challenge of a race-baiting black man running in a very white state: "It's almost kind of an 'in' thing to vote for the black conservative now," shrugs Thompson.) But introducing a candidate to voters is tough when your campaign coffers hold less than $2 million, and the Keyes folks are clearly bitter about their undercapitalized condition—particularly as it relates to Forbes's resources. Maurer made it clear that he thinks many Forbes folks are in it "for the money," and he turned up his nose at the campaign's practice of luring young people—"high school students too young to vote"—to rallies with promises of free food and drink. Bauer, by contrast, is doing so badly that the Keyes folks can afford to be more gracious about his campaign, but they're clearly pleased that Bauer's more than $6 million in spending has taken him nowhere. Bauer's campaign is in debt, and "the staff had to take a 50 percent pay cut three months ago," says Maurer, struggling not to look gleeful.

As for Keyes, despite a 75 percent increase in contributions last quarter—bringing his cash on hand to a whopping $1.02 million—the campaign still operates on the thinnest of shoestrings, with little money for TV ads or even paid staff. Mailings are the lifeblood of the campaign, along with the occasional radio spot. The campaign is working on a few last-minute surprises to up the candidate's profile, but ultimately Keyes's supporters are counting on his angry charisma, in stump speeches and free media like the debates, to resonate with a conservative wing that also seems to be running on empty. "I just pray he has enough time to get more of these appearances," gushes Remillard. "He has to be seen." I'm sure Tim Russert feels the same way. ■

Bradley and Gore's mutually assured reduction.

Lose-Lose

By JOHN B. JUDIS

DAVENPORT, IOWA

AL GORE HAS taken off his jacket and stands in starched blue shirt and tie at the podium of Davenport's West High School. Behind him sit the school's cheerleaders. In front of him, on the gym floor, sit supporters from the building trades and the teachers' union. Just about every line of Gore's speech contains a dig at Bill Bradley. "With the Gingrich forces in charge of Congress, maybe it did seem to some that nothing could be done—and that we couldn't reform old and failing programs like welfare, or defend old and successful programs like Medicare," says Gore, shoehorning references to Bradley's 1996 decision to leave the Senate, his opposition to welfare reform, and the lack of new Medicare funding in his health plan into a single contemptuous sentence. "But never for one moment did we lower our sights.... With determination and the will to take on the special interests and *fight* for what's right, we replaced paralysis with progress." When he says "fight," Gore jams his right index finger into his palm. It's typical campaign hyperbole—of course the Clinton administration lowered its sights after the 1994 GOP takeover—and it's hardly

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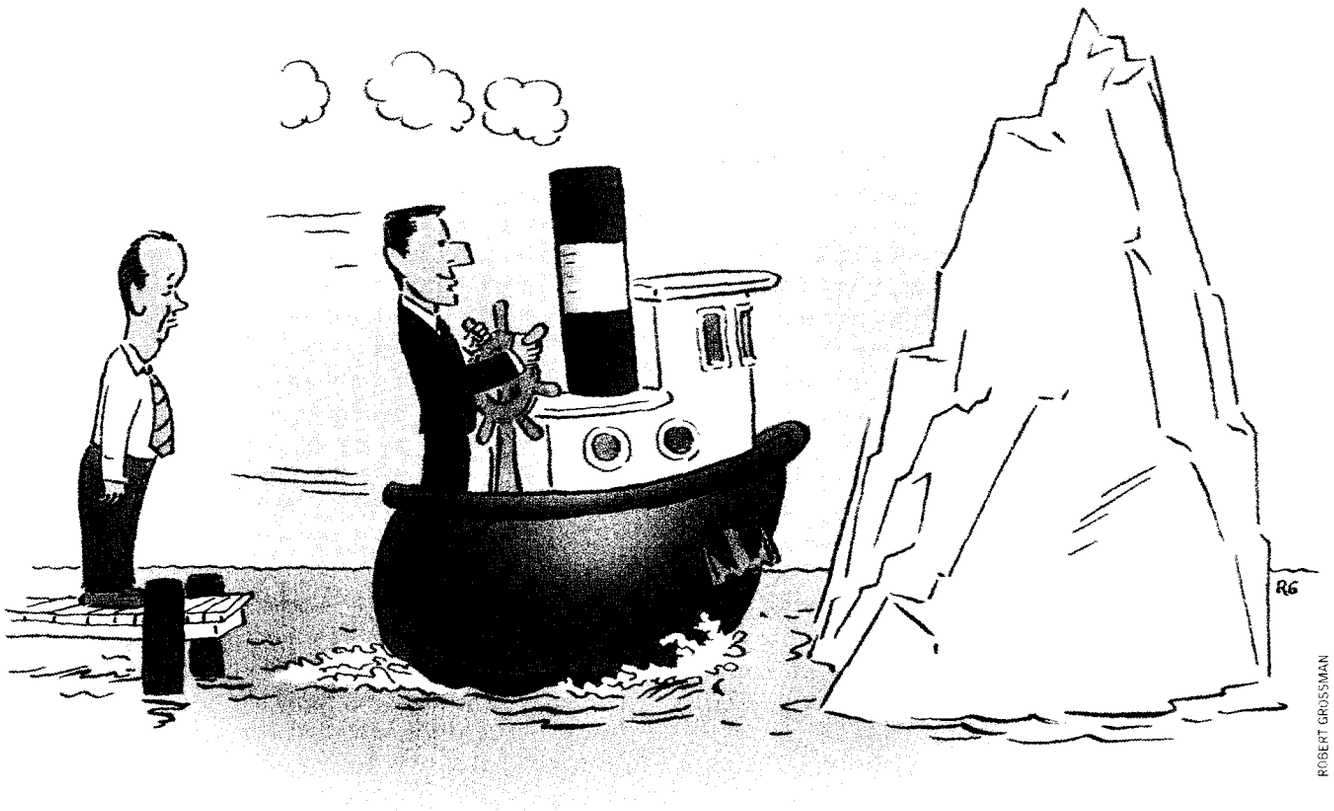

ROBERT GROSSMAN

eloquent, but it's good enough. Gore's supporters eat it up.

And good enough is pretty much how Gore is doing—at least versus Bradley. The press, ever desperate for a horse race, has fixated on the idea that Bradley can win. But the odds are long. Gore may well lose New Hampshire, but frontrunners often stumble there, and their stumbling is hardly ever fatal. Gore will survive a loss in New Hampshire for the same reasons Walter Mondale, Bill Clinton, and Bob Dole did—he has a superior organization, the support of powerful local Democratic politicians, and the allegiance of the party's core voting blocs. For the vice president, that's the good news. The bad news is that, unlike George W. Bush, who has used the primary to position himself for the general election, Gore isn't helping his image among the swing voters he'll need in November. In fact, as a result of his pugnacious campaign against Bradley, he may be in worse shape for the general election than he was this summer, when his primary campaign was in free fall. Bradley may be losing, but—so far, at least—Gore's victory is looking awfully Pyrrhic.

Gore has not outshone Bradley in debates or on the campaign trail, but his attacks have weakened his opponent enough to allow the vice president's advantages to come to the fore. These advantages can best be grasped by looking at something the poll-obsessed press usually ignores: delegate numbers. Gore enjoys almost universal support among the Democratic officeholders, union officials, and interest-group heavies who make up the nonelected "superdelegates" that comprise 18 percent of the final delegate total. Gore already has commitments from more than 500 of these 799 delegates, and he should win about 700 of them. Even if Bradley did better than that, winning half of the still uncommitted superdelegates and holding Gore to 650, he would still have to win 57 percent of the elected delegates to get the nomination. If Bradley and Gore were to split the early contests (from Iowa on January 24 to Southern Super Tuesday on March 14), then Bradley would have to win 65 percent of the remaining delegates—an almost impossible task. Bradley's best and perhaps only chance is to rout Gore in New Hampshire on February 1 and in New York and California on March 7. If he does that, some of the superdelegates might abandon Gore, and the vice president could be pressured to withdraw. But there's no evidence, from polls or conversations on the ground, that a rout is likely.

First of all, Gore's county-by-county organization and his support among Democratic officeholders actually matter in primaries, in which only ten to 20 percent of eligible voters usually participate. In California, where Bradley needs to win big, Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante is mobilizing Hispanics for Gore; in New York, Representative Charles Rangel and Comptroller Carl McCall are mobilizing blacks; in Iowa, Senator Tom Harkin, Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller, and hundreds of local officeholders are rounding up caucusgoers; in the South, Gore has the support of virtually every elected Democrat, black or white.

Just as important, Gore controls three key Democratic voting blocs: unions, blacks, and Southerners. Union members and their families make up from a quarter to a third of the likely Democratic electorate in such crucial early states as Iowa, New York, California, Ohio, Michigan, Washington, Maryland, Missouri, and Massachusetts. And the unions that most enthusiastically back Gore are those that wield the most influence in crucial primary and caucus states—the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association (NEA), and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. In Iowa, where only 100,000 Democrats will vote in the caucus, the NEA has 32,000 members, and the AFL-CIO boasts about 150,000. Except for a few locals, Bradley has no union endorsements. In talking with union members and leaders in caucus and primary states, I found different degrees of enthusiasm for

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Gore, but no enthusiasm at all for Bradley. Said one communications director for an industrial union, "It is still a question whether our members are going to take to Gore . . . [but] our members don't like Bradley. He has never been on our radar."

Gore has also been courting black organizations and churches for the past three years, and he has inherited their support of Clinton. Bradley has Phil Jackson and Walt Frazier, but Gore has the pastors and politicians who get out the vote. Twenty-nine black House members have endorsed him, as well as the black mayors of Cleveland, Jackson, Houston, Flint, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Rochester, Denver, Des Moines, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C. Even in New York, where Bradley leads, Gore is ahead two to one among blacks. In the South, Gore has solid support among Southern whites and blacks. David Bositis, who does polling for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington, D.C., says, "There is absolutely nothing about Bill Bradley that represents any natural attraction to people from the South. In terms of whites, he is considered too liberal. In terms of blacks, Gore is part of the Clinton team, and Clinton is by far the most popular leader among blacks since Lyndon Johnson."

Bradley's support is concentrated among upscale Democrats, Northeasterners, and political independents. In Iowa, for instance, Bradley is leading Gore only among Democratic households earning more than $75,000. This kind of support will help Bradley in New England and New York but not in the Midwest, West, or South—not even in California, where independents can nominally vote in the Democratic primary but their votes are not counted toward the selection of delegates. In terms of race, class, and region, Bradley's base is too narrow, and he's shown no ability to widen it.

IF BRADLEY HAD a window of opportunity, it was this fall, when he made the cover of *Time* and became the darling of pundits everywhere. (Alexis Simendinger of *National Journal* said on "Hardball" that if Bradley were to win New Hampshire, as was then predicted, "most people that I've talked to do not believe that Al Gore could possibly be the nominee.") But then Gore went on the attack, and the very factors that led to Bradley's rise kept him from developing an adequate response.

Gore's strategy toward Bradley echoes the strategy Clinton employed against the late Paul Tsongas after Tsongas won the New Hampshire primary in 1992. Stitching together stray quotes and old votes, Clinton relentlessly questioned Tsongas's commitment to core Democratic constituencies. Gore has done the same thing—attacking Bradley's vote for President Reagan's budget cuts in 1981 and his support in 1992 of a $30 million experimental voucher program in a few low-income school districts. Bradley could have thrown some of these charges back at Gore. In 1986, for instance, Gore voted for a Republican constitutional amendment to balance the budget—an amendment that would have inflicted greater damage on Democratic social programs than the Reagan budget cuts did. But, until this week's anti-tobacco salvo, Bradley has responded to Gore's barbs exactly as Tsongas did to Clinton's—by expressing indignation rather than by countering with charges of his own.

Bradley has gotten caught in a box of his own construction. By claiming to offer a different "leadership style" from Gore's and by dwelling on his distance from Washington, Bradley has capitalized on the dissatisfaction—particularly among independents and upscale Democrats—with the Clinton scandals. But Bradley is not merely running against the corruption of Washington; he is running against politics itself. He couches his programs as appeals to morality rather than to special interests. "He is running as the last virtuous man on the planet," says Guy Molyneux, a vice president of Peter Hart's polling firm. Given this posture, Bradley can't attack Gore's past policies or his role in White House fund-raising without seeming to give in to politics as usual.

BRADLEY'S INFATUATION WITH big ideas has also blinded him to the need to sell his policy to voters. Throughout the spring and summer, Bradley criticized Gore for proposing "incremental," "bite-sized" programs and promised that he would offer "big ideas" for solving America's problems. With that in mind, Bradley set out to develop a plan on health care. Some of the health care experts he consulted, including Edie Rasell of the Economic Policy Institute, advised Bradley to extend Medicare to children—a relatively inexpensive reform that would be easy to understand and would lay the foundation for universal health insurance. But Bradley opted instead for a complex plan that would use tax credits to induce the un-insured, including the poor, to purchase their own insurance. Bradley's plan would replace Medicaid, but it doesn't appear to offer comparable benefits. It also seems to offer employers an incentive to stop insuring their employees. And, as quickly became apparent, it would cost almost double what Bradley claimed—eating up almost the entire budget surplus and making it impossible, at least under the current mystical consensus, for Bradley to offer any other big initiatives. Bradley's staff warned him about the program's projected costs, but he didn't listen. He went ahead with his "big idea."

Gore immediately went on the attack, and Bradley's replies verged on incomprehensible. When Gore charged in the January 5 debate that Bradley's plan would leave some New Hampshire Medicaid recipients "high and dry," Bradley contended that "even on a weighted average, even on a cap with a family of four in New Hampshire would be eligible under the program I've offered. And with a weighted average even the individual could bump up so that they would be available as well." Oh, OK then.

Bradley's failure to win the health care debate has left a hole in the center of his campaign. Bradley can still evoke his commitment to campaign finance reform, and he can charge that his leadership style would be different from Gore's, but he has to define leadership narrowly—as the absence of corruption rather than the promise of compelling new social policy. Without a popular health care plan, Bradley has nothing to offer union members and pro-Clinton Democrats that Gore cannot easily match.

Gore, in his brutal assault on Bradley, seems to have finally found a political identity, though at a cost. Gore's efforts last year, like his 1988 presidential campaign, were marred by

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Zelig-like transformations of his public image. He couldn't seem to decide whether he was the techno-environmentalist who promised to mend "suburban sprawl" and speed up the Internet or the godly anti-materialist who wanted to promote "faith-based institutions." In public, his emotions appeared fake. But, ironically, Bradley's emergence this fall gave Gore the identity he couldn't create on his own. Gore fell back on the persona that worked for him when he debated Ross Perot over NAFTA. He became a "fighter"—in this case, against Bradley and on behalf of core Democratic constituencies. Gore's aides date this new image to his Jefferson-Jackson dinner speech in Des Moines on October 10 when he unveiled the campaign slogan "Stay and fight."

Gore the fighter accents the negative in his opponent rather than the positive in his own program. In Gore's Davenport speech and in the materials that his staff handed out, there was barely a mention of the vice president's environmentalism or his interest in science and technology—exactly the parts of his political identity that might offer a compelling vision of the future. Will Marshall, president of the Progressive Policy Institute, calls Gore's strategy "mutually assured reduction." Assuming that your initial support is greater than your opponent's, do everything you can to drive up your opponent's negatives even if you end up driving up your own as well. And focus relentlessly on issues—like vouchers—that drive a wedge between your opponent and core primarygoers, even if that alienates swing voters.

Gore's ruthless new strategy has worked. Perhaps too well. It is hurting him among the weak Democrats and independents who support Bradley and among the moderate Republicans who backed Clinton in 1996—in other words, among the people he has to win in November. After dispatching Bradley, Gore will have to reinvent himself once again—and it will be harder, because of the image now lodged in the public's mind. And, if he doesn't reinvent himself, he will learn the same lesson learned by Walter Mondale, another Democratic front-runner who dispatched an insurgent preaching "big ideas": that hewing close to the party's core constituencies is a good way to win a Democratic nomination and a good way to lose the presidency. ■

Meet the power behind segregated television. You.

Adjust Your Sets

By TAMAR JACOBY

"NETWORK TV WILL never again look like it did this fall," declared NAACP President Kweisi Mfume as the major TV networks prepared to unveil ambitious new goals and timetables for increasing minority representation in their industry. The NAACP's triumph, announced this month, came as no surprise. Ever since Mfume first issued his challenge in July, network executives had been on the defensive. When the NAACP complained about the dearth of minority actors in the fall lineup, every network scrambled to add minority characters. When Mfume escalated his demands, arguing that the problem was less in front of the camera than behind the scenes, the Big Four networks apologized and held closed-door meetings with the civil rights leader. Then the NAACP demanded answers to detailed questions about employment practices. When the TV executives didn't respond quickly enough, Mfume threatened a national protest: demonstrations at network headquarters and a massive boycott—by as much as 20 percent of the viewing audience—during January and the critical sweeps month of February.

At that point, with the networks off balance, Mfume moved to close the deal. The last round of public pressure took place in November at an NAACP-sponsored "diversity hearing" in Hollywood. The meeting began with a confession of guilt. "We have much to improve," announced CBS President Leslie Moonves. But the other three networks had made the mistake of sending only vice presidents, not top men, and an irritated Mfume refused to give them the floor as scheduled. For two and a half hours, the executives stewed in the back of the room, until finally, tired and humiliated, they walked out. But even then, at an impromptu news conference, they sounded apologetic: "We believe our record is absolutely as good as CBS's," an ABC exec said contritely. "Some of the initiatives that Les announced today we were also planning to announce." Within a couple of weeks, the three network presidents who had missed the Los Angeles hearing flew to Baltimore to meet with Mfume and hammer out agreements. NBC announced its plan on January 5, ABC followed two days later, and Fox and CBS reportedly will do so any day.

It was an impressive show of muscle, but what the pacts will accomplish is far from clear. The networks have pledged to establish minority recruitment programs, add minority writing slots to successful shows, and do more business with minority suppliers. But adding minority writers and characters to prime-time programs is no guarantee that minority viewers will watch them. (In fact, there are more black actors on CBS, ABC, NBC, and Fox today than ever before—a number proportionate to the percentage of blacks

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in the population. Yet many black viewers still feel alienated by network television.) And, even if the Big Four churn out shows that satisfy the NAACP, advertisers will not back them—and so the shows will not last—unless the programs also appeal to whites. Mfume is not wrong: TV viewing is shockingly segregated. But the problem goes far beyond the major networks, and they cannot remedy it by adding actors or even executives. Ultimately, lily-white prime-time lineups are only one symptom of a larger, more ominous trend.

The real problem is that, when they watch television, blacks, whites, and Hispanics increasingly segregate themselves into racial and ethnic ghettos. Blacks' favorite 20 shows hardly overlap with whites'. Hollywood writers, producers, and executives talk unabashedly about "black programming," a quantity so distinct and well-defined that networks can deliberately vary it, adding and subtracting as if it were a recipe ingredient, to manipulate the color of their audiences. Advertisers assess the racial mix likely to watch any show and place ethnically targeted ads accordingly. On some networks, even the days of the week are racially tagged: UPN's "black night" is Monday, WB's is Friday. Of the Big Four networks, NBC makes the least effort to reach people of color and, as it happens, is by far the most popular among whites. And then there are explicitly black and Hispanic channels, such as BET and Spanish-language Univision, which is now the nation's sixth-largest and fastest-growing network, with a national audience two-thirds the size of CBS's.

Unlike old-fashioned segregation, the segmentation of TV viewing is voluntary, and it isn't hard to understand how it came to be. In the 1950s and '60s, most homes had one television with three channels; today, the average household boasts two or three sets, and, depending on location, each receives between 40 and 100 stations. Instead of watching "what's on," viewers can tune in to what speaks directly to them—and, it turns out, the language that speaks most loudly is often racial or ethnic. Neither Hollywood nor Madison Avenue creates these preferences; they merely respond to them. Executives claim, echoing Jerry Springer, that the media's only responsibility is to give the people what they want. But just as television shapes viewers' attitudes about sex and violence, so it powerfully shapes their views on race. And, like the end of the draft or the decline of the common school, the demise of integrated TV viewing means Americans from different backgrounds share less and less.

IT WASN'T ALWAYS this way. During the first decades of television, blacks were practically invisible. But, in the 1970s and '80s, Hollywood began to come to terms with America's changing racial realities. For anyone who watched the newly integrated television of that era—Norman Lear's "All in the Family," "Sanford and Son," "The Jeffersons," and "Good Times"—the experience was unforgettable. Blue-collar paterfamilias Archie Bunker personified the old order: unrepentantly bigoted and a bully to boot. He railed against the upheavals of the '60s but gradually, and belligerently, accommodated himself to them. In one classic installment of "All in the Family," circumstances bring Sammy Davis Jr. to the Bunkers' house, and Archie, torn between his prejudice and his admiration for the entertainer, struggles to find a way to greet him. At the episode's climax, Davis proposes a toast to friendship and Archie heartily endorses it, then realizes that between them they have only one glass and the black man has already drunk out of it. Archie says nothing, but the expression on his face is priceless, and the audience dissolves in laughter. "Archie did a great thing for both blacks and whites," says one black man looking back today. "He made us confront the demons we all had—both blacks and whites. And he showed us just how silly they were, how ultimately ridiculous bigotry is."

"The Jeffersons" and "Good Times" centered around black rather than white families, but the issues these later shows explored were the same—blacks making their way into the white world—and they did so in a way that both blacks and whites could identify with. In one of the most telling episodes of "Good Times," 17-year-old J.J. dreams he's a white man for a day, highlighting for both himself and the audience just how much difference, and how little, his color really makes. ("Isn't there something new about you?" one perplexed coworker asks, to uproarious laughter, as if J.J. had changed his way of dressing or cut his hair.)

THEN, IN THE early '80s, television began to change, revolutionized by the advent of cable. Compared with the networks, most cable stations are tiny, boasting, at any given hour, tens of thousands of viewers, compared with 20 to 30 million. But the rise of new outlets forever shattered the networks' monopoly and the unifying power that went with it. In contrast to Lucille Ball, who frequently drew a 70 percent audience share in the early '50s, today's biggest stars are thrilled to reach 20 percent; even Jerry Seinfeld at his best reached only one-third. As recently as the mid-'90s, 19 shows regularly attracted 20 million viewers; in the 1998–1999 season, only four did. At first, the TV audience splintered mostly along lines of interest: a food channel or a station specifically for golfers. But then, in the early '90s, the networks discovered programming based on race.

Fox stumbled upon it first. Because it was a start-up, Fox relied initially on smaller, weaker urban carrier stations that delivered a heavily minority audience. In 1990, in an effort to appeal to these viewers, the new weblet aired "In Living Color": a weekly variety show modeled on "Saturday Night Live," but with a heavily black cast. The program caught on big—at least by the standards of the newly fragmented market. So Fox followed up with another "black show": a sitcom created for stand-up comedian Martin Lawrence that was also, by Fox's standards, a runaway hit. Within a few years, Fox execs had created a full roster of black sitcoms, and by the 1994–1995 season the little start-up boasted black America's three favorite shows.

The tone of these new programs and the lives they depict are worlds away from shows created for integrated audiences. Their style, their slang, and virtually all their characters are black. The white world, if mentioned at all, is suspect—enemy territory. The comedy is generally broader and more explicitly sexual, and a host of cultural references—everything from O.J. jokes to plots vilifying black men who date white women—underscore the targeted

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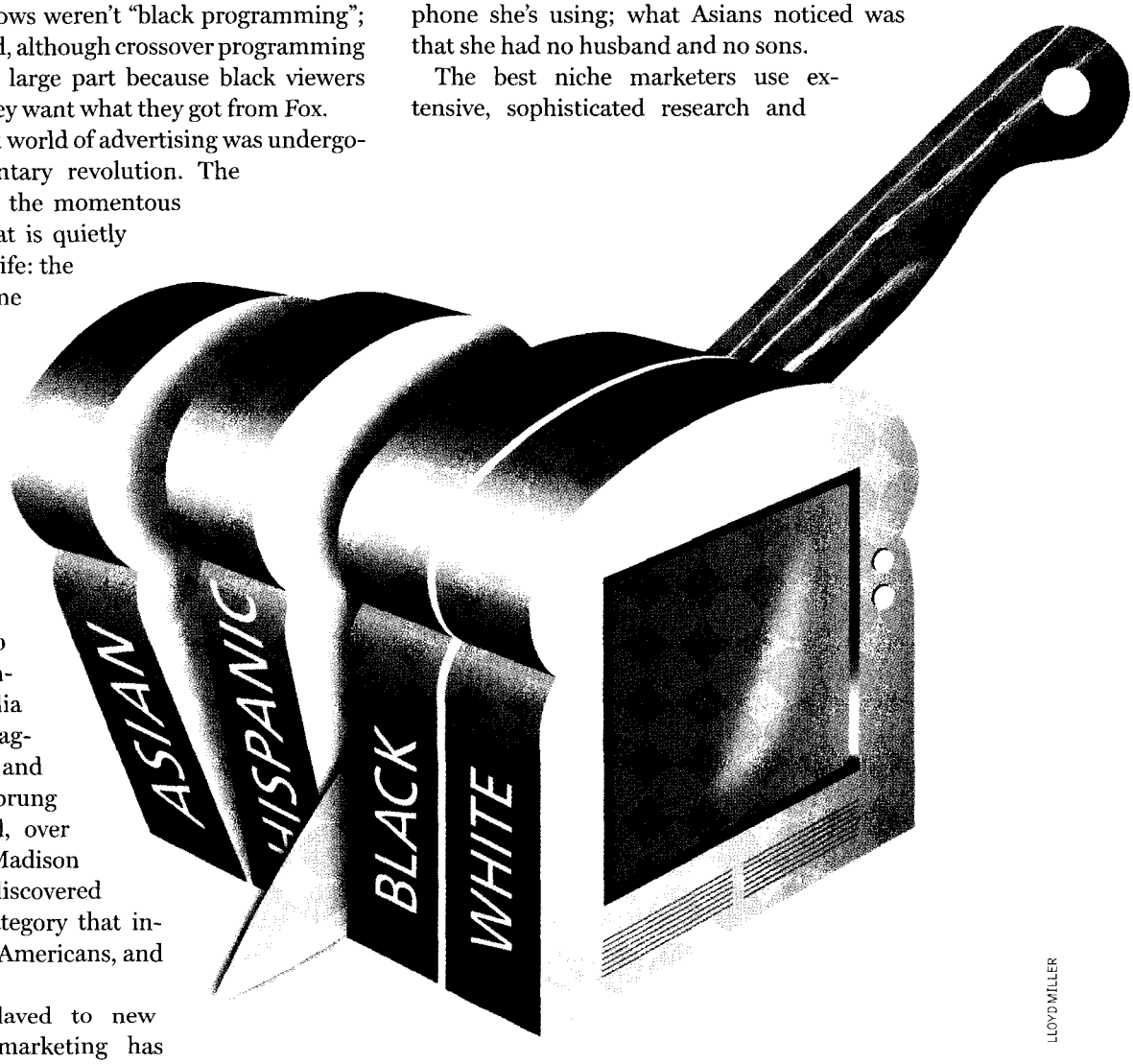
nature of the programming. Norman Lear calls these comedies "Yo' mama shows" and contrasts them with his own classic programs, including those with largely black casts. "Our shows were about the special problems blacks face—racism and other problems," Lear recalls. "But they were also about families. George Jefferson could have been my Uncle Yonnie. In fact, he was my Uncle Yonnie. And most people—all kinds of people—related to the shows as family shows." In Hollywood terms, the Lear shows weren't "black programming"; they were "crossover." And, although crossover programming isn't dead, it's ailing—in large part because black viewers don't seem to want it. They want what they got from Fox.

Meanwhile, the related world of advertising was undergoing its own complementary revolution. The roots of this shift lie in the momentous demographic change that is quietly transforming American life: the arrival since 1965 of some 25 million new immigrants. Though many newcomers remain relatively impoverished, their disposable income—and the size of their families—is growing faster than any other group's, propelling more and more immigrants into the middle class. Hundreds of new ethnic media outlets—newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and TV channels—have sprung up to serve them. And, over the past five years, Madison Avenue has finally discovered ethnic consumers—a category that includes Hispanics, Asian Americans, and African Americans.



LLOYD MILLER

In an industry enslaved to new trends, ethnic niche marketing has become the hottest new thing. A cottage industry of separate Hispanic, black, and Asian American agencies, some linked to the world's top firms, has sprouted up, along with a network of market-research businesses and synergistic corporate consultants. Advertisers' mailboxes are awash with ethnic-marketing newsletters, and just about every week brings another professional conference in New York or Miami or Los Angeles. According to one estimate, spending on ethnic marketing has more than doubled in the past five years, reaching close to $4 billion. And, like the producers of black TV shows, ethnic niche marketers live by a simple truth: what pushes blacks' (and Hispanics' and Asians') buttons is different from what pushes whites'.

The ethnic strategies that advertisers use are as varied as the ads on television. Some are as simple as the skin color and language of the actors: Fannie Mae spots with black instead of white characters inquiring about mortgages; telephone-company ads translated from English into Spanish. Others are subtler. Eliot Kang, whose Kang & Lee agency handles AT&T's Asian American outreach, tells a story about using an Asian focus group to test an AT&T pitch featuring a professional mother who cancels a meeting to take her daughters to the beach. Anglo focus groups picked up on the convenience of the wireless phone she's using; what Asians noticed was that she had no husband and no sons.

The best niche marketers use extensive, sophisticated research and know more about ethnic Americans than any pollster does. But the best are not the norm. The majority of advertisers rely on surprisingly broad generalizations about the customers they're trying to reach. Many spots created for black and Hispanic media involve singing and dancing and, in the case of black ads, more explicit sexual content. Hispanics, the industry's conventional wisdom goes, are more emotional than other consumers, African Americans more given to conspicuous consumption. Hispanic women are said to be more sensual and feminine than their Anglo sisters, more preoccupied with romance, and less interested in pursuing careers. The more that marketers explain what they do and why, the worse it sounds: they are peddling blatant stereotypes now deemed unacceptable in almost every other realm of American life.

Hollywood and Madison Avenue have always worked hand

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in hand—television delivers the viewers, advertising pays the bills—and this is as true as ever for the new niche marketers and their television counterparts. The problem, in this case, is that the synergy creates incentives for segregation. Ethnic advertisers scour the TV schedule for shows and channels that "aggregate" viewers of the type the client wants to reach, delivering up their "eyeballs" for commercials. Sports events draw disproportionately minority audiences, as do integrated shows with ethnic leads. But the best bet for a concentrated pool of ethnic viewers is programming created exclusively for minorities. For blacks, in recent seasons, this has meant WB and UPN, the weblets that have taken over the black beat from Fox. BET is also a possibility, though its limited lineup—geared mostly to a younger audience—limits its appeal to advertisers. Hispanic agencies have it easier. Though largely unknown in the Anglo world, the Spanish-language Univision is catching up with the Big Four. (It claims more teenage viewers than MTV, close to twice as many male sports fans as ESPN, and a nightly news audience ten times that of CNN—every single viewer a likely target for advertising aimed at Hispanics.) The more target viewers are segregated, the easier it is for ethnic ad agencies to do their job. Similarly, a network like Univision wants—actually, needs—the proliferation of Spanish-oriented marketers looking to buy time.

DRIVEN BY THIS interest, ethnic marketers and media have come together to form a kind of lobby committed to convincing corporate America that ethnic customers are inherently different. Univision and other outlets spend millions of dollars a year on market research, all of it making a case for segmentation—and some of it blatantly inaccurate. It's conventional wisdom in ethnic marketing circles, for example, that most Hispanics are foreign-born, that they're more comfortable in Spanish than in English, and that they watch mostly Spanish-language television. In fact, the Hispanic community is far more complicated. Though some recent immigrants are more comfortable in Spanish and prefer Spanish-language television, the census bureau reports that some 60 percent of Hispanics living in the United States were born in this country. Almost all of this group is more comfortable in English, and the average Hispanic household spends two-thirds of its TV time tuned in to English-speaking stations. Still, Hispanic advertisers place the overwhelming share of their pitches in Spanish-language media. And, as a result, the growing number of Latinos who are becoming acculturated to American society—and would like to see themselves reflected in the mainstream media—are left out in the cold. Though they will soon be the nation's largest minority, Hispanics hardly ever appear on mainstream television, mainly because the networks, swayed by ethnic marketers' propaganda, do not compete for them.

The advertising-television lobby also dabbles in politics. In 1998, Univision owner A. Jerrold Perenchio spent several million dollars to defeat California ballot initiative 227, which would have banned bilingual education and mandated that Hispanic kids learn English. The Reverend Al Sharpton is an ally—his Madison Avenue Initiative pressures corporate America to hire ethnic marketers and advertise in ethnic outlets—as is Federal Communications Commission Chairman William Kennard, who has spent much of his tenure seeking tax breaks and other preferences for minority media owners. Last spring, there was even talk of government-mandated "goals" to insure that ethnic outlets got their "fair share" of advertising. And, though that seems to have faded, pressure tactics are having an impact in the corporate world: boycotts and denunciation in ethnic media have wrung significant concessions from CompUSA, Pepsi, and other companies.

HOLLYWOOD, MADISON AVENUE, the FCC, and a growing contingent in corporate America: It's hard to imagine a more formidable alliance pushing segregated television. But, in the end, this group could not succeed if its agenda did not dovetail with viewer preferences. And the truth is that viewers, too, seem to have changed since the '70s and '80s. Today, few shows without black faces make it into the black top 20, and, unlike in the '70s, blacks show little interest in programs that feature black actors in largely white settings. Doug Alligood, a senior vice president at the advertising firm BBDO who is black and traces racial viewing habits, explains the shift this way: "Blacks today aren't as interested in assimilating. They don't feel they have to be like whites to be happy with themselves." The NAACP wants more shows that reflect this new sensibility. But ultimately—in an irony still unrecognized by the NAACP—the rise of ethnically targeted programming can only whiten network television.

The reason is that the Big Four, and increasingly even weblets like WB and UPN, can't make money on shows that have no appeal to the largest block of viewers: whites. Even the most popular black programming gets no more than a two or three percent audience share. But, in order to attract serious advertising, a major network needs double-digit ratings. It's not that advertisers don't want to reach black audiences; they want to reach anyone who might buy their products. But the rise of black viewing on separate channels and in separate time slots means that many agencies have to choose—and, predictably enough, most opt for the larger and generally more affluent audience.

The networks haven't entirely given up on crossover programming, but today such shows fail far more often than they succeed. The early '90s show "I'll Fly Away," a thoughtful NBC drama set just before the civil rights movement, was typical: critically acclaimed and ignored by viewers. "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air," starring Will Smith, was a charming and relatively successful comedy, but it was nothing like what NBC hoped it would be: another "Cosby Show." Some blacks in Hollywood blame white viewers for these failures: unlike their counterparts in the '70s and '80s, the criticism goes, white audiences today aren't interested in black people's lives. Perhaps. But many whites are plainly comfortable watching and identifying with black characters—the Cosby family or, say, Eriq La Salle's character on "ER." What makes them uncomfortable is an all-black world like the one on "Martin" or even the more wholesome and middle-class "Moesha."

The result is that crossover programming often seems like a circle that can't be squared. The more popular a mixed-cast

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show is with whites, the less popular it inevitably proves with blacks. In the age of political correctness, integrated comedies are far riskier than they used to be. Today, "All in the Family" and "Sanford and Son" would offend many viewers and possibly even produce boycotts. It's also harder than ever today to reconcile the divergent ways in which whites and blacks see race relations. Whites don't particularly want to watch shows about white characters behaving badly toward blacks, but anything else, in the eyes of black audiences, is a whitewashing of reality. No wonder the crossover shows that work best—CBS's New Age "Touched by an Angel" and the network's shoot-'em-up perennial, "Walker, Texas Ranger"—are both set in fantasy worlds free of the friction and mistrust that come with real-life integration.

What's perplexing about the failure of crossover TV is that crossover works so well in so many other kinds of popular culture: white Americans are entranced by black music, black fashion, black athletes, and black showbiz personalities. Integrated programming fares reasonably well on cable, and HBO has made a specialty of it, with comedies, documentaries, and feature films about subjects like Nelson Mandela and the Tuskegee airmen. The reason this works, according to HBO Chairman Jeff Bewkes, is that HBO doesn't air advertising, so it can make do with a three or five or seven percent audience share rather than the 15 or 20 percent a major network program needs to survive. Norman Lear is convinced that even mass crossover could be successful. "It would work if it were out there," he says. "Nobody's trying to do it today." Other optimists are waiting for the right performer. "Crossover has always been about stars," says UPN President Dean Valentine. "It used to be Cosby and Richard Pryor. Today it's Oprah. Tomorrow it could be Chris Rock," the popular, trash-talking black comedian. Still others are looking forward to Steven Bochco's new hospital drama, "City of Angels," on CBS, which will feature a mostly black cast.

BUT, IRONICALLY, THE best hope for crossover programming may lie in the vanguard of the very field that has done so much to make it so difficult: niche marketing. The best of the ethnically targeted ads come from the big-name corporations that have always made the best commercials: car manufacturers, beer distributors, sneaker companies, and the like. They have the most accurate and sophisticated information about consumers—including ethnic consumers—and, in marked contrast to the conventional wisdom among most other ethnic marketers, their information tells them that people want it both ways. Ethnic consumers want their cultural differences recognized, but not in a manner that isolates them and, ideally, in the context of a shared America. "People want to be acknowledged but not pandered to," says Mike Michels, a spokesman for Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A. Like a number of car companies, Toyota caught the ethnic-marketing bug early, and the firm advertises extensively in ethnic media outlets, including in Spanish. Yet most of the ads are subtle, the theme simply that Toyotas are dependable—*whoever you are*. Coors has also reached out to Hispanics, but with spots that talk about family and tradition and other universal values. "You do not want an ad that suggests being Hispanic means you are totally different or totally separate from other Americans," a Coors executive explains. One particularly effective McDonald's pitch shows an olive-skinned father and son on a baseball field speaking in unaccented English. The effect is almost subliminal: most Anglos don't even notice the pair's skin tone, but in its subtle way the ad speaks directly to Hispanic customers.

THESE ADS ARE brilliant crossover, and they point the way for others, including TV programmers. The goal is to acknowledge difference without isolating blacks, Hispanics, and Asians in ghettoized ethnic media, making them all but invisible to white viewers. What's at stake for corporate America and Hollywood is billions of dollars. But what's at stake for the rest of us is even greater. "We're a media-driven society," says *Latina* magazine publisher Christy Haubegger. "The images we see in the mass media shape what we think of ourselves and others." For Haubegger, this is a rationale for using Hispanic-looking fashion models and running magazine features about Latina astronauts. But it is also—even more powerfully—a rationale for advertising and TV programming that reflect an integrated society: one enriched by ethnic flavoring but not preoccupied with difference. "To the extent that ethnicity is woven into the fabric of images in a sophisticated way, that helps us accept ourselves as American," says Gregory Rodriguez, a fellow at the New America Foundation. "Like you, we know ourselves by virtue of what we see on TV, and we want to see ourselves—as we are, but also as a part of the mainstream."

In the future, as today, audiences will drive what airs on television. And, encouragingly, even the most ardent ethnic marketers and programmers are convinced that tomorrow's audience—today's kids—has a different take on race and ethnicity. Haubegger is waiting for a TV show that reflects the friends she remembers from her school days: a group, she recalls, that looked like a "Benetton ad." "Kids today are different," agrees UPN's Dean Valentine. "Kids 15 or 16—they don't think about race the way you and I do. And eventually television will respond to that."

It's an appealing prediction. If enough integrationist younger viewers respond to the integrationism of the best ethnic marketers and the best shows, conventional wisdom in Hollywood could turn dramatically. But it's not clear which will prove stronger—the next generation's relaxed attitude toward race or the chauvinistic, ghettoizing assumptions young people have picked up from most '90s television and marketing. In fact, according to BBDO tracker Alligood, the preferences of younger black and white audiences are even more divergent than those of their elders, thanks in large part to the WB and UPN shows that appeal primarily to young black viewers. While kids may start out more open-minded, this doesn't seem to translate into taste—at least not in the large numbers that matter to TV producers. The NAACP has pinned the blame on the networks, but ultimately the fault lies less with the studios than with ourselves. If segregated television didn't work, it wouldn't air. And, when it airs, it makes us less the society we once imagined we could be. ■

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Miami's passionate, self-defeating fight for Elián González.

And a Child Shall Lead Them

By Charles Lane

MIAMI

As leader of Brothers to the Rescue, a Miami-based group of small-aircraft pilots who assist Cuban refugees making the hazardous journey across the Strait of Florida, José Basulto has seen his share of tragedies. At first, he didn't see much difference between Elián González's case and all the others. He thought the boy should probably go back to his father in Cuba.

But then Fidel Castro began loudly demanding Elián's return, which immediately caused Basulto, who has been fighting Castro almost as long as Castro has been in power, to rethink his position: if Fidel wanted something, it couldn't be good. Returning the boy to his father would mean, in a way, returning him to *el tirano*.

And there was something else. As he heard more about Elián's survival at sea—about how the five-year-old clung to an inner tube for dear life as the adults from the capsized boat, his mother included, gradually lost their strength and slipped under the waves—Basulto began to sense that God himself had intervened to save Elián. "This was a clear case of a miracle," he told me, adding matter-of-factly that "when they found [Elián] he was surrounded by dolphins." As the story goes, the Lord sent the sea mammals to protect the boy, as if he were one of heaven's own angels, until two fishermen happened upon Elián and pulled him to safety on Thanksgiving Day. Now Basulto, in his capacity as adviser to and spokesman for Elián's Miami relatives, is leading the campaign to keep Elián in the United States. He advocates mass resistance to any attempt by the Clinton administration to send the child back to Cuba.

It would be easy to dismiss this tale of deliverance by dolphins as the propaganda of an interested party. The story's origins are obscure: neither the fisherman who actually saved Elián, Donato Dalrymple, nor the Coast Guard officer who arrived to help out saw any porpoises at the scene. Dalrymple told me he has heard Elián (who was barely conscious much of the time in the water) say that he saw dolphins. But Basulto struck me as completely sincere. And he is far from the only Miami Cuban who believes the story. Time and again, Cuban-Americans here recounted Elián's rescue by the dolphins as evidence that a power much higher than the Immigration and Naturalization Service has decreed that the boy, who recently turned six, must stay with his great-uncle and great-aunt in Miami instead of returning to his father and grandparents in Cuba. "Maybe the dolphins pushed him toward the shore," Vicente Quintana, 63, told *The Miami Herald*. "And then he was found by the fishermen. Any Cuban would know this is a story straight out of the Bible." And any Cuban would know that you don't send angels back down to hell.

Much has been written about how the Miami Cubans are callously using Elián for political gain—parading him before the cameras as living proof of both the perfidy of Fidel Castro's regime and their own electoral muscle. Yet, as the widespread belief in the dolphin miracle suggests, the campaign to save Elián is not very calculating or even very political, if by politics you mean an activity guided at least partly by a strategy. Yes, politicians—from the local congressional representatives to the major presidential candidates—have duly come forward to express sympathy for the crusade to keep Elián here, in deference to Cuban voting power. But that's just the usual pandering. In many ways, the fight for Elián is actually a desperate one, a battle being waged despite clear indications that it may be counterproductive—a battle that reflects the Cuban-American community's fears and weaknesses rather than its hopes and strengths.

The hard fact is that, under U.S. law, the case for denying Elián's father custody is weak. By demanding "a day in court" despite INS Commissioner Doris Meissner's ruling that the boy should be returned to Cuba by January 14, and by blocking traffic and threatening to "paralyze" Miami to make their point, the usually law-abiding members of the Cuban-American community have suddenly given their neighbors in South Florida the impression that they consider themselves to be above the law. Polls show that, at a time when the Miami Cubans need all the allies they can get, the protests are isolating them politically; they enjoy practically no support from non-Cuban whites or blacks and relatively little from other Latinos. It is not likely that a Dade County judge's decision to call a hearing, to be held March 6, on the boy's Miami relatives' bid to be named Elián's legal guardians will stand. But, even if it does, it may only reinforce the already widely held view in Miami that the system gives the Cubans all the breaks—especially since it has come out that the elected judge once paid a hefty political consulting fee to Armando Gutierrez, another spokesman for Elián's Miami relatives.

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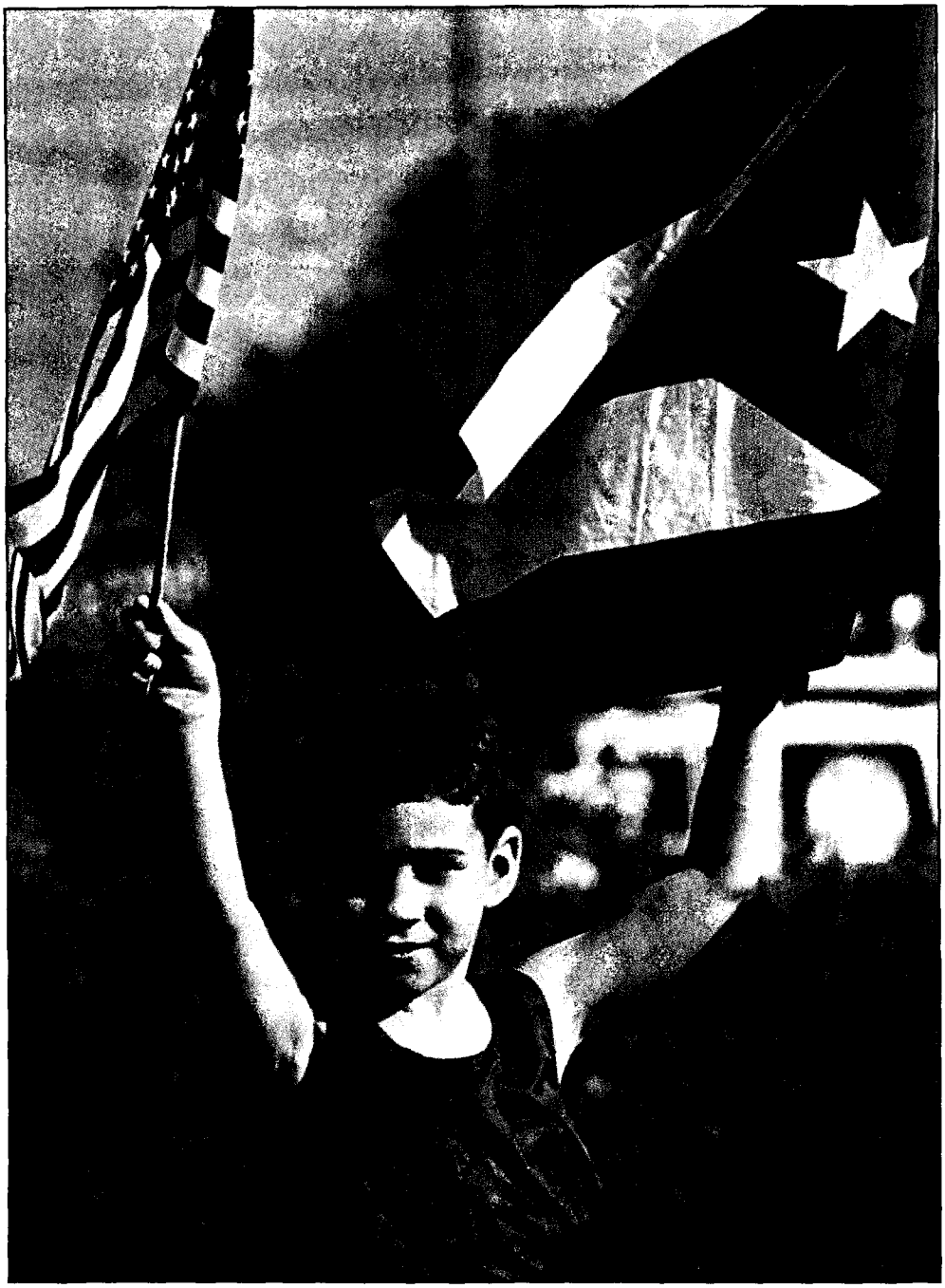
AFP

Even worse, the Miami Cubans are playing into Castro's hands. To be sure, Castro himself has demagogued the tragedy, giving the United States a 72-hour ultimatum for Elián's return and ranting against the "mafia" in Miami. But, by responding in kind, the Miami Cubans have allowed Castro once again to pose as the stalwart foe of reactionary exiles—and even as the defender of family reunification. Castro's pose is, of course, preposterous, especially given the number of Cuban families his dictatorship has shattered. Moreover, Elián's father is surely not as free to express his true wishes for the boy as the INS determined. And perhaps in some other context an uncompromising posture from Miami would have been appropriate.

But, for all that, the case for returning the boy to his sole surviving biological parent still strikes many people as commonsensical; quite simply, Castro has a leg to stand on. Thus, he has had no trouble creating a colossal distraction from the real story in Cuba—which is economic decay accompanied by increasingly harsh repression of a small but slowly strengthening internal dissident movement. Those brave activists for democracy scored a major victory last November 14 when, despite Castro's efforts, they met with visiting Latin American and Iberian leaders during the Iberoamerican Summit in Havana. Soon thereafter, a group of three dozen or so pro-democracy activists pulled off a rare protest march in the streets of the capital. But nobody's talking about any of that now.

In short, when this is all over, the verdict on the Miami activists might well be that they exploited Elián for political *loss*. Why, then, do they persist? The answers lie deep in the cultural and psychological interior of the community, in the dynamics of what Damian Fernandez of Florida International University has called "the politics of passion."

To outsiders, the exiles seem a successful, even privileged, immigrant group. Through hard work and business acumen, the Miami Cubans have achieved, individually and collectively, a permanent place in the great American middle- and upper-middle classes. In a real sense, they have built modern Miami. Through unified voting and the astute deployment of campaign cash, they have secured a kind of veto power over U.S. policy toward Cuba, along with such immigration benefits as the Cuban Adjustment Act, which grants Cubans, and only Cubans, the right to legal residence upon their arrival in U.S. territory.

But the Miami Cubans do not see themselves in such secure terms. Their own narrative is tinged with betrayal and defeat. It is no accident that they call themselves exiles rather than immigrants. No matter how much they achieve economically, their community's reason for being was, and is, political. Cubans came to Miami—and still come—not because their first choice in life was to become Americans but because they felt that communism had driven them from home. They still define themselves largely as victims—each with a story of personal suffering and dispossession and each acutely mindful of the continuing hardship endured by family members back on the island.

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Theirs is an ambivalent view of the United States, a country whose generosity and liberty they appreciate but whose government they have long blamed for failing to liberate their island—beginning with the great sellout at the Bay of Pigs. Another watershed event was the shootdown of two of Basulto's Brothers to the Rescue aircraft by Cuban MiGs in international airspace on February 24, 1996. Four Miami Cubans, three of whom were U.S. citizens, were killed in the attack, which was Castro's way of dealing with previous Brothers flights that had dropped anti-Communist leaflets on Havana. Yet there was no military response from the United States.

Basulto, a veteran of both the U.S. Army and his own quixotic Florida-based raid on Cuba in the 1960s, believes the Clinton administration knew that Castro planned the attack on Brothers and gave him the green light to remove a nuisance to both governments. He believes that his men were sacrificed on the altar of U.S.–Cuban rapprochement. Now, he believes, the two governments are at it again: "The Cuban government and the Clinton administration are trying to harmonize relations with each other at the expense of Elián," he told me. This feeds both Basulto's outrage at the prospect of Elián's return and his willingness to promote civil disobedience in order to stop it.

Indeed, on Miami's 50,000-watt AM station, Radio Mambí, there was an almost anti-American tone to the rhetoric employed by Basulto and other exile commentators. The street demonstrations that so annoyed Miami commuters were depicted as a "glorious day" in a "battle" between the "Cuban people" and "the North American government." Listeners were regaled with stories of the purported brutality with which the Miami police arrested Cuban protesters. No one pointed out that such wildly exaggerated claims (in fact, the police remained mostly passive, even when crowds blocked critical intersections for hours) were not exactly consistent with the exiles' central contention that Elián must stay because, unlike Cuba, this is a land where the authorities respect people's rights.

Furthermore, many Miami Cubans regard theirs as a *uniquely* cruel victimization, one so profound and personal that other Americans couldn't comprehend it even if they wanted to. "If you are Cuban, you know what I mean," 31-year-old Henry Cuik, one of those who took to the streets in protest, told the *Herald*. "If Cuban blood does not flow in your veins, you have no idea of what it is like to be us—all of our memories of what it is like under Castro and what it means to be separated from your homeland." I half expected some witty entrepreneur to print T-shirts declaring: "It's a Cuban thing—you wouldn't understand."

Indeed, there's a rough analogy between the Cuban-American reaction to Elián's plight and the African American reaction to O. J. Simpson's trial (though, of course, there's no analogy between the innocent child and O. J. himself). Miami's Cubans insist that Elián must stay, no matter what the stubborn legal realities may be and no matter what the rest of society may think—just as many blacks stuck to their belief that racist cops framed O. J. For these blacks, believing O. J. was innocent became a near-mandatory element of group identity—an article of faith that helped define what it meant to be black rather than white. The belief that Elián must stay serves a similar function among Miami Cubans. The fact that so few nonmembers of the group agree only fortifies the Cubans' sense that they must be right.

And there's another element to the analogy: the reactions of both groups, though emotional, have a rational basis. Thanks largely to the O. J. case and subsequent scandals in police departments around the country, it has emerged that cops *do* plant evidence and rough up minority suspects more frequently than most whites had believed. Similarly, life in Communist Cuba *is* much harsher and more humiliating than most American newspaper readers, fed a steady diet of stories about the free health care and education on the island, generally appreciate. Cuba is a country penetrated by government spies, where you can go to jail without due process for such offenses as *peligrosidad*—"being dangerous." Fixated on the evils, real and exaggerated, of American policy toward Cuba, and Latin America in general, Western journalists, academics, and human rights activists have never championed freedom in Cuba with anything approaching the energy they devoted to denouncing dictatorships in Guatemala or Chile. And that, too, fuels Cuban Miami's sense of isolation and grievance.

"I'M FIGHTING THE desire to go park my car in the streets in protest," Raúl Hernandez, who works resettling newly arrived Cuban refugees, told me after the INS decision. A doctor in Cuba, he came to Miami in the 1980 Mariel boatlift because of the persecution he and his colleagues suffered. He'll never forget watching a government mob pelt a colleague with garbage for expressing a desire to leave the country. "How can they be so ignorant?" he says. "How can they not see?... There's a sense of horrible frustration that no one pays attention to Castro's violations of human rights." Whether or not the Cuban exiles are in touch with contemporary political reality, they are more in touch with Cuba's historical reality than many of their critics.

Yet translating these feelings into a positive political agenda has grown increasingly difficult since the 1997 death of Jorge Mas Canosa, the founder and president of the largest exile organization, the Cuban American National Foundation. Immensely controversial because of the way he threw his weight around in both business and politics, Mas Canosa nevertheless enjoyed the grudging respect of even many liberal Cubans for his charisma and his ability to get things done in Washington. With Mas Canosa gone and Castro still in power, influential business organizations and even Republican senators such as John Warner feel freer to openly call for lifting the trade embargo against Cuba and adopting a new policy of "engagement." And the Clinton administration has moved in that direction as well, encouraging cultural and academic exchanges, bargaining with Castro to control the flow of refugees, and floating such ideas as U.S.–Cuban cooperation against drug trafficking.

Unable to do much more than play defense against the growing pro-engagement mood in the foreign policy establishment, many politically active Miami Cubans believe the U.S. government is preparing to write them off, along with

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their home island. This fear takes its most hyperbolic form in the political commentaries broadcast daily on Spanish-language radio, where the INS decision in Elián's case is likened to the Bay of Pigs—and where many predict that the Clinton administration will grant Castro's demand for the abolition of the Cuban Adjustment Act.

And it's not just the militants. You hear the same incipient despair in calmer quarters, too. In one of the trendy bars that dot upscale Coral Gables, an old friend of mine, a thirty-something Cuban-American attorney who steers clear of exile politics, ruefully conceded that lately he's been trying to reconcile himself to the possibility that Cuba might still be Communist when he's 60. "There's a feeling, especially since the death of Mas Canosa, that the whole thing's slipping away," he told me. "Not only the hope of overthrowing Castro, but even the ability to influence U.S. policy and to make people understand the cause. The entire exile idea is threatened. Then what are you about?... It starts to go to the identity of the people who live here."

ENTER ELIÁN. FOR the exiles, the shipwrecked little boy is the perfect totem because he embodies so much of what they believe about themselves: that they are innocent victims. The boy's arrival has given the exiles an opportunity both to reconsecrate the foundations of collective identity and to revalidate their own decisions to leave home. In this sense, the crisis is as much about shoring up the community's eroding sense of purpose as it is about scoring points against Castro. "People are arguing that Elián should stay because they believe they are on the right side—the right side morally, and the right side of the Strait of Florida, because Cuba is an evil place," says Lisandro Perez of Florida International University. In their custody petition to the county court, lawyers for Elián's Miami relatives argue that the father should lose custody because he wants Elián to live in Cuba and that this request makes him, ipso facto, an unfit parent. By that logic, anyone who chooses to have children in Cuba would be an unfit parent.

But behind such arguments lies the defeatism wrapped deep within the exiles' thinking about both Elián and their larger predicament. Clearly, no one should take lightly Elián's return to a society where he will learn to worship Che Guevara—and perhaps be instructed that his own mother was a "deserter"—even if his father and grandparents are there to tuck him in at night. On the other hand, he is only six. Communism in Cuba can't possibly last his whole lifetime. Indeed, if you're concerned about a better future for Elián and for all the other children in Cuba, doesn't it make more sense to focus on hastening the end of communism than to facilitate and celebrate the escape of its victims, one by one, to America?

It's far from clear how this situation is going to resolve itself. It appears to be headed for federal court. Republicans in Congress may try to grant Elián citizenship. Meissner's ruling that Elián should go back to Cuba did not include any enforcement mechanism, merely a suggestion that the two sides of the family work something out together, perhaps with the aid of a charitable third party. That idea, never terribly plausible to begin with, is looking more and more like a nonstarter—even a bit irresponsible, given that Meissner's job isn't just to state the law but to make sure it's carried out. But the INS has said there will be no spectacle of federal marshals fighting their way through a human chain of elderly Cuban exiles to collar a six-year-old boy and ship him out of the country.

MY GUESS IS that we have only begun to appreciate how truly explosive the case of Elián González is. The politics of passion is a two-way street. Fidel Castro is, after all, a product of the same political culture as his Miami nemeses, and this is a man whose passions have had a decidedly apocalyptic edge in recent years. He has staked too much on Elián's return to let the exiles thwart him through legal maneuvering. Furthermore, he can't keep herding his people into the streets forever; the campaign has begun to affect Cuba's already anemic economy, and there are signs that it's starting to backfire politically, as quotes from Cubans mocking their commander-in-chief begin to creep into the Western press. "*Elián, amigo, llévame contigo*"—"Elián, my friend, take me with you"—goes one popular satire of an official slogan.

If he doesn't get Elián soon, Castro might retaliate by declaring that the United States is acting in violation of a 1995 accord that regulates migration from Cuba to the United States, and that Cuba is therefore unilaterally withdrawing from the accord. The deal is intended to prevent another chaotic exodus like the one in August 1994 that brought more than 30,000 people on flimsy rafts to the U.S. base at Guantanamo, while hundreds of others drowned. It requires both countries to prevent people from attempting to cross illegally, while expanding the number of legal immigrant visas offered through the U.S. Interests Section in Havana. Thus, if Castro pulled out of the accord, it would be a cue to Cubans to take to their boats once again—creating a massive refugee crisis in the middle of a U.S. election campaign. In fact, the fear of just such a scenario probably accounts for much of the Clinton administration's eagerness to wrap up the affair quickly, on Castro's terms if necessary.

If the nightmare scenario occurs, many Cubans will die at sea. Many more Cuban families will be divided. The primary responsibility will be Castro's. To be sure, such a mass exodus could slip out of control and undermine his rule. But, in the likelier event that it doesn't, the Miami Cubans, who, in this crisis, have felt compelled to meet Castro's every action with an equal and opposite reaction, will have much to answer for, as well. It isn't too late for them to reconsider their position, to think strategically instead of symbolically, to substitute real politics for the politics of passion. Cold-hearted as it may sound, they should not let the fate of a single child outweigh any and all other considerations. Among those other considerations is the struggle for democracy on their home island, a cause that ought to be theirs but from which they are diverting vital energy and attention. Right now, the Miami Cubans are on course for what would be at best a Pyrrhic victory, one in which they somehow manage to keep Elián but leave Castro with an even tighter grip on the real prize: Cuba itself. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Struggles in the Dark

ALAN PARKER, WITH Laura Jones, has written a fluent screenplay of **Angela's Ashes** (Paramount) and has directed it with sympathy and skill. Thus in a way Parker enlarges the basic appeal of Frank McCourt's book.

Autobiographies of people who had impoverished childhoods reassure us by their very existence. As we read page after page, we marvel that the person who endured this privation quite evidently survived, triumphantly enough to write this book. With a film derived from that book, we are aware of an additional triumph: the person's struggle has moved on to a further victory. I remember this feeling when I saw Mark Donskoy's masterly trilogy based on Gorky's autobiographical writings, and, in some measure, I felt it again in Parker's picture.

Those who know McCourt's book, all multiple thousands of them, will know that they must expect to do some trading here. The original material had to be slimmed for a film. (Even so, it runs 145 minutes.) In exchange the film will, they hope, offer its own arts to amplify the condensed work. The success of any such exchange obviously depends on how well, in its selections, the film realizes our earlier private picturings, perhaps even intensifies them.

In this exchange, Parker does generally well. If, for instance, Mam's variations in color and Dad's Fenian exhortations when drunk are reduced, we get insistent presences of all kinds, the voices of the family, its friends and enemies, the eyes, the persistent gray dankness of the light. McCourt's book is condensed but not in sum diminished because whatever the film touches, it dramatizes well.

As in the book, the film begins in the 1930s with the immigrant Irish family in Brooklyn, then continues with the return to Limerick, Dad's unemployment and his drinking when employed, Mam's worn but inexhaustible strength, the deaths of siblings, Frank's education in school and in the world, all as the family worms its way along like an auger through tough wood. What's surprising is that, though the film doesn't exaggerate the book's squalor, it seems to dwell more acceptingly in it. In the book the family refers to the ground floor of their dingy little Limerick house as "Ireland," covered in puddles, bare of furnishings; the furnished, dry floor above is "Italy." Parker reduces those terms in the film, but the sight of Frank and his brothers coming in the front door and sloshing through water on their way to the stairs—every time they come home—makes the contrast with the floor above more trenchant. The fact that he and the others don't even comment about these conditions underscores a sense of fate. These are people who *live in poverty*. This is their medium; they expect all of their existence to happen here.

There are glints of light along the way, oppressions and constrictions that seem comic—now that they are past—particularly to do with Frank's teachers and with his arrival at puberty. The persons and fulminations of his teachers (actors ingeniously chosen) turn the classrooms into punchinello theaters, at least in retrospect. Frank's first sexual experience and the subsequent destiny of the girl make that episode a crystal of life—gain with a touch of comedy, loss with a touch of satisfaction.

The two leading adult actors are wonderfully subscribed to the enterprise. By the time Emily Watson got to *Hilary and Jackie*, she showed that she had more in her than the hysteria with which she had started. Here she grows further, into a strength that can exist without hope. I haven't cared much for Robert Carlyle's rodent-profile appearances in *Trainspotting* and others; here, equipped with a Belfast accent (Dad is from the North) instead of his native Glasgow speech, Carlyle expands into three dimensions. But Parker's directing miracle is with the children. Joe Breen, Ciaran Owens, and Michael Legge, who play Frank at three ages, are utterly true, as are all the children in the film. (How often, as we gape at adult acting, we overlook what directors have achieved with children.)

The making of this film is deft without cleverness. Michael Seresin's camera avoids bright sun almost entirely yet finds light to weave with the shadows, as counterpoint to the story. John Williams's score has lilt without merriness and keeps reminding us how feverishly these people listened to American pop. Parker, who is English, has had a widely varied career, including *Midnight Express*, about a young American jailed in Turkey on drug charges, *Mississippi Burning*, about the murder of three civil rights workers in 1964, and *The Commitments*, about young working-class Dubliners forming a band. Now this artistic itinerant has embraced a different sort of Irish working class. Parker does not try to make stark poverty ennobling: still, like McCourt but somewhat more darkly, he shows poverty as a world in which very much of the range of human feeling can persist.

Julie Taymor is a unique American designer, adventurous, humorous, exciting. I first saw her work in 1980, in Elizabeth Swados's theater production of *The Haggadah*, for which Taymor did sets, costumes, masks, and giant puppets that made the whole work epic and gemütlich at the same time. She is also an experienced director, in opera as well as theater, and some think that directing is her chief talent. I missed her New York production of *Titus Andronicus* and haven't yet seen *The Lion King*, but I have seen some of her other work, as well as the fascinating illustrated book about her published by Abrams. When I heard that she was to make her first full-length film, I thought that the film world was lucky.

Not so far. **Titus** (Fox Seachlight) is a thesis, unproven. Taymor believes that Shakespeare's earliest tragedy (if it is entirely by Shakespeare) is especially apt at this time. The story involves murder, rape, and maiming (hands lopped off) in ancient Rome, a story that she seeks to put in place as a comment on the daily data of television. To emphasize modern relevance, she begins with a modern boy in a modern kitchen who is swept back into the past as eyewitness (though he virtually disappears once he gets there), and we see modern artifacts throughout: tanks, trucks, motorcycles. But Taymor's rendering of the play is so remote and cold, so disjointed, so devoid of Shakespearean current and surge, that the result is a sequence of fragments. They don't build to unity, let alone resonate against modern brutalities.

Titus is a Roman conqueror who brings Tamora, the queen of the Goths, and her sons, as captives back to Rome. Titus has one of her sons executed, thus unleashing the queen's revenge that rages through the play. It is not only difficult to follow the

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story in Taymor's screenplay, it is difficult to respond with either a sense of tragic fall or low-level shock. Attempts have occasionally been made by theater people and Shakespearean critics to install *Titus* in the high Shakespearean pantheon, but nothing that happens in this film adequately counters T. S. Eliot's view that this is "one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written." (Even the editor of the Pelican edition, Gustav Cross, begins his introduction: "*Titus Andronicus* is a ridiculous play.") Taymor knows all this and meant to disprove it. But her best result is in distancing the gory absurdities so far that the play seems too abstract to be ridiculous.

The film's main asset is Anthony Hopkins's performance as Titus; yet it can hardly be called a performance. Hopkins, magnificently equipped for the role, is so burdened with directorial maneuver that he cannot fulfill his design. Outstanding in inadequacy among the others is Jessica Lange, as the vindictive queen. Regality and savagery are not within Lange's grasp. The one competent actor in the cast besides Hopkins is Harry J. Lennix, who is Aaron. (One of Shakespeare's three Moors: besides Othello, there is the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice*.) Lennix is incisive, with cool diabolical pride in his evildoing.

I don't understand why such a superlative designer as Taymor wanted others to do the sets and costumes. Dante Ferretti and Milena Canonero are proven talents, but this production seems to be taking place in ill-lit railway terminals and football stadiums after hours. Why didn't Taymor do the designs? It might at least have made the film more visually engaging. ■

Robert Brustein on Theater

The Element of Surprise

In good theater, as in real life, the only constant is change, the only predictor is the unforeseen, the only invariable is surprise. Just as philosophers have always understood that reality is a compound of flux and uncertainty, so the better playwrights have usually recognized that human character, being essentially elusive and unknowable, evades our efforts to classify it. All of Pirandello's plays, for example, and most of Chekhov's, concern the false restrictive brackets with which others try to surround us (and with which we often surround ourselves), whether as heroes or villains, liberals or conservatives, and so on. Sometimes we try to escape these classifications; sometimes it is more comforting to embrace them. But in good drama the unpredictable nature of human character and human destiny functions as a rebuke to the crude categorical thinking associated with narrow ideologies.

Many people, of course, don't like surprises in life, and are even more uncomfortable with surprises in the theater—that is why we have Broadway musicals, RSC Shakespeare, and resident theater *Christmas Carols*. But whatever its entertainment value, predictability is invariably a sign of theatrical bad faith. It is also a sign of bad playwriting. Once you get ahead of a plot or a character, you have effectively replaced the writer and begun to write the play yourself.

I defy you to get ahead of the plot of **Fuddy Meers**, a new play by David Lindsay-Abaire at the Manhattan Theatre Club. It is nothing if not surprising. I am also tempted to say that it is nothing but surprising. With its giddy twists and turns of plot, and its dizzying technical ingenuity, the play almost began to shake my conviction in the value of unpredictability.

Claire, a victim of "psychogenic amnesia," wakes up each morning with no memory. Her cheerful husband must read her a manual of who she is, where she lives, and why her teenage son is behaving so badly. The moment he goes into the shower, a man in a ski mask emerges from under her bed. Displaying a limp, a mutilated ear, and one blind eye, he claims to be Claire's brother, though he bears no resemblance to her physically or socially, and offers embraces that seem considerably more erotic than fraternal.

Before long, she is hustled into a car with her son and driven away at high speed. When a female cop stops them for a ticket, the limping man grabs the officer's gun and abducts her, too. They drive to the house of Claire's mother—a pleasant woman whose recent stroke has deprived her of coherent speech. The way she distorts the English language, in fact, provides most of the evening's amusement. Indeed, it is she who gives the play its title: "fuddy meers" is her verbal mangling of the "funny mirrors" that Claire once saw in a carnival.

Nobody, including the female cop (eventually revealed to be the limping man's accomplice) turns out to be who they claim to be. But the kidnapping is the occasion for a good deal of mayhem, including one stabbing, two gunshot wounds, and a knock on the head with a frying pan. True to the cartoon tradition from which the play derives much of its style, none of the victims is seriously affected by these assaults. Like an animated rabbit flattened by a steamroller, each of them rises up to resume his original shape with little more than an ache or a bruise. Meanwhile, the plot gradually unthickens, the relationships are slowly revealed, and everyone eventually gets his just deserts.

I won't describe these deserts, since there would be nothing left of the play if I did. Totally plot-driven, *Fuddy Meers* uses the element of surprise exclusively as a strategem for entertainment. The play shows the influence of a couple of better works—notably Craig Lucas's *Reckless* (in its account of a perplexing female odyssey) and Tracey Letts's *Killer Joe* (in its sudden employment of random violence). But for all the ingenious surprises, and despite an expert cast and a talented director, it lacks the inner dynamic of a meaningful work.

Suzan-Lori Parks's **In the Blood** (at the Public Theater) is a bit of a surprise, too, and not an altogether satisfying one. I am delighted that this wonderful playwright is finally getting the recognition that she deserves. I am sorry that the praise withheld from such imaginative constructs as *The America Play* and *Venus* is now being lavished on an inferior work.

Since nothing Parks writes is without value, *In The Blood* contains some compelling moments, and, under the direction of David Esbjornson, it enjoys a pretty good production. Set under a New York bridge in the present time, the play is intended to be a modern version of *The Scarlet Letter*, with Hester Prynne transforming into "Hester, La Negrita," a homeless black woman with five bastard

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children by five different fathers. When the lights go up, Hester is practicing her writing—working mostly on the letter "A." She seems to make her living by flattening soda and beer cans, and passes her time telling fairy stories to her kids. When she appeals for money to the Reverend D. (a tub-thumping black minister who is Parks's stand-in for Reverend Dimmesdale), he gives her a lecture on sin and corruption before demanding another free blow job.

The play is a virtual compendium of Hester's tribulations. The Doctor, ignoring Hester's painful gut aches, has scheduled an operation to remove the "woman's parts" that are responsible for her numerous dependent children. The Welfare Woman makes Hester massage her back and comb her hair in return for some measly welfare checks. One of her ex-lovers returns to accept his obligations as the legal father of his child, only to reject Hester when he discovers she has four other illegitimate kids. In short, this is one of those inspirational pieces about the Human Capacity to Prevail and Endure, animated more by the energies of victimology than by Parks's customary poetic resources.

Charlayne Woodward as Hester, all teeth and dimples, seems to me a bit too elegant and well-bred for the part of this homeless wretch, but she gives a very strong performance nevertheless, and so does the rest of the cast, doubling as Hester's forlorn children and Hester's adult victimizers. Despite its subject and setting, *In the Blood* is not an altogether conventional piece of realism. The language is occasionally heightened, and some of the characters are even allowed to have monologues (called "confessions"). The surprise is that the play is so linear when compared with the playwright's previous writing, and that, by the same comparison, the dialogue is so declarative.

Insane Love

Please stop me, Miguel,
I'm spinning. Put your very thin
lips in the shape of "no" and hold me
tight on your narrow hard chest.
Birds call out for a new life,
screech as water recedes from the shore.
I want to live in your house,
think Cuban, as you are, learn
to iron and starch the khaki shirt
you wear under a green pullover.
Yes, I like your chipped tooth,
your hands restless for mine and
the full circle of your dark, dark eyes.
You live in a marina of sorts,
I in a beehive of frenzy—

How shall we meet? Forget
that you are a boy and I a girl,
gay or black or butterfly.
My wedding finger likes
no ring, but it does want you
to stay at my table with that wry,
wry humor sighing a lullaby.
Call me.The attraction of
the time we spent together is a lizard,
unblinking, colorful, wide awake.
You, too, need an embrace.
There's a net hauling us in.
We're tropical, our natural habitat
under the waterfall, near
the spiders, the bats, secrets retold.

Alice Rose George

FOR THE DIRECTOR Andrei Serban, the element of surprise is almost an organizing principle. His recent Shakespeare productions, three of them at my own theater, have been efforts to rethink and to reinterpret virtually every moment of the play, every line of the text. This doesn't mean that Serban is above taking ideas from other directors. He disdains borrowing; he simply steals. A native Rumanian who trained with Peter Brook, he approaches the classics with absolutely no respect for tradition or orthodoxy or authorship, which is why he often seems to be sending them up.

Serban's version of **Hamlet** at the New York Public Theatre is among the sassiest productions of his career thus far, an act of impudence "and much offense, too" that is virtually guaranteed to bring down the wrath of critics and scholars. It reminded me of one of the Public's earliest and most vilified productions—Joseph Papp's 1968 *Hamlet*—where Martin Sheen did Puerto Rican standup comedy with the Gravedigger, and Claudius performed obscene acts with the dead Ophelia inside her coffin. (In Serban's *Hamlet*, as in Bergman's, Claudius makes out with Gertrude in plain sight of the audience, and Laertes, though warning Ophelia about Hamlet's "importunity," seems equally interested in her "chaste treasure.")

Using a text composed of the three versions of the play (including the so-called "bad" first quarto of 1603), this approach is an effort both to cleanse our minds of all previous interpretations and, at the same time, to keep us fully conscious of them. Thus Serban's production is as much about the act of performing *Hamlet* as it is about the play. It begins with a stagehand spritzing fog all over the stage with a hand-held machine. Instantly, we know where we are—in a theater—and Serban never lets us forget the theatrical roots of his approach. Instead of one Ghost, we have four; instead of one Fortinbras, two (one of them a woman). The Ghost's story of his murder is illustrated by a shadowgraph. During Polonius's admonition to his departing son, Laertes and Ophelia eat ice-cream cones. In the nunnery scene with Ophelia, Hamlet wears a pig snout. After his remarks about how certain actors have "imitated nature so abominably," the entire cast parades across the stage holding posters of a dozen or so post-war *Hamlet*s, including the current one. The players are jugglers and acrobats; one of them is an aerialist. The same aerialist transforms into Osric, the waterfly. The Gravedigger plays his scene not with another gravedigger but with a skull that doubles as a ventriloquist's dummy. These are but a few among examples too numerous (if not too outrageous) to mention.

If this *Hamlet* is about the public nature of the theater, it is also about the end of privacy. Every conversation, even the soliloquies, is being monitored by eavesdropping state functionaries, peeping through spy holes, snooping around corners, sneaking into corridors, with their binoculars, tape recorders, and notebooks. Claudius's Denmark is not only a prison, it is a totalitarian state, populated with informers and spies.

Serban's combination of theatrical and political commentary turns *Hamlet* into a kind of deconstructed postmodern satire that will appeal mainly to those who don't know the play at all or who know it all too well. One could single out individual actors for praise or blame, but the performances eventually seem less important than the performance ideas, not all of which are as witty as Serban thinks. But Liev Shreiber, the current Hamlet, evolves—after a difficult start (his first soliloquy is virtually an effort not to puke)—into a figure of real power and command. Slightly vain and self-regarding at first, Shreiber gradually becomes the coldest, most ruthless, most sexually nauseated Hamlet since Peter Stormare's prince in the Bergman version. He feels absolutely no remorse over killing Polo-

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nius. Indeed, having safely stowed the corpse, he comes onstage gorging on a turkey leg. In the play-within-the-play scene, he treats Ophelia as a puppet with himself as the puppeteer. And although his closet scene is damaged by an oddly hoarse and uninflected Gertrude (Diane Venora), he is quite wonderful in the duel scene with Laertes, a vigorous and dangerous piece of swordplay staged by Shreiber himself. Schreiber manages to develop more and more edge as the evening proceeds, eventually putting one in mind of the young Richard Burton.

As for the production as a whole, it is full of goofy things, it sometimes gets in the way of the actors, and it is full of enough bad taste to offend everybody. But it is never trivial, it is never gratuitous, and it is never boring, for all its three-and-a-half-hour length. Also, despite Serban's love of vaudeville shenanigans, the production has its moments of spirituality. At the end, the four soldiers ordered to bear Hamlet's body to the stage lift up his tunic as if his soul were ascending. Like many of Serban's touches in this production, it is an absurd idea that makes you think. The Peck's bad boy of theatre, he is a director who often mistreats the use of theatrical surprise, but he is someone seriously trying to push his art forward, often at considerable risk to his career. For that, we ought to mix in some gratitude with our critical buckshot. ■

Walter Benjamin's failed messianism.

One-Way Street

By RICHARD WOLIN

The Arcades Project
by Walter Benjamin
translated by
Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin

(Harvard University Press, 1,054 pp., $39.95)

The Complete Correspondence, 1928–1940:
Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin
edited by Henri Lonitz
translated by Nicholas Walker

(Harvard University Press, 384 pp., $39.95)

I.

FOR YEARS AN aura of mystery has surrounded Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, the *chef d'oeuvre* on which he labored fitfully during the last thirteen years of his life, from 1927 to 1940. His letters of the period furtively allude to a projected work that aimed at expounding nothing less than a new "materialist philosophy of history" and a "primal history of the nineteenth century." What Benjamin intended by these pithy, elusive descriptions has been a source of enormous speculation and controversy.

That the work survived at all is something of a miracle. With the fall of France in 1940, Benjamin fled the rapidly advancing Wehrmacht and, fearing the worst, hastily entrusted his precious manuscripts to his friend Georges Bataille, who concealed them in the bowels of the Bibliothèque Nationale. A few months later, Benjamin took his own life on the Franco-Spanish frontier rather than fall into the hands of the pro-Nazi Vichy authorities.

After the war Pierre Missac, following Benjamin's wishes, contacted Theodor Adorno with the information that Benjamin's manuscripts had indeed survived. Adorno, who had been devastated by his friend's death, could barely conceal his

RICHARD WOLIN is the author of *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (University of California Press). His new book *Heidegger's Children: Philosophy, National Socialism, and German-Jewish Identity*, will appear next year.

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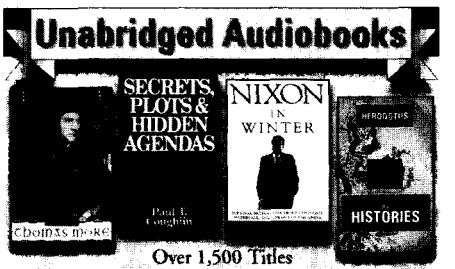

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exhilaration. "The decisive theoretical sketches for *The Arcades Project*," he wrote to Missac in 1946, "go back to a relatively early date: Benjamin read the first important excerpts aloud to me in Königstein [outside Frankfurt] in 1928. Among these excerpts was a metaphysical theory of the gambler. These things were doubtlessly among the most ingenious Benjamin ever wrote; it would be extremely important for me to know precisely how much has been saved." And in uncanny anticipation of the enormous philological difficulties that Benjamin's thick packet of notes would incite, he went on to remark: "Everything depends on whether the material in your possession consists in large part of theoretical formulations and sketches, or whether it mostly contains excerpted citations that may have had theoretical significance for Benjamin, yet which would, even for me, remain *uninterpretable*."

THREE YEARS LATER, Adorno had come to a preliminary conclusion about the nature of the materials in his possession, and the verdict did not bode well. In a detailed letter to Gershom Scholem, he expressed the fear that his doubts about *The Arcades Project* had been confirmed. Benjamin had long flirted with an experimental method of composition that he called the "dialectical image." Under the influence of montage techniques that had been used with such success in the 1920s by both filmmakers and surrealists, Benjamin had turned away from the idea of laborious theoretical exposition, preferring instead an unglossed construction of so-called "material elements," which consisted of direct citations or stark empirical observations.

When the method was successful—as, for example, in his great surrealist-inspired collection of aphorisms, *One-Way Street*—the results were extraordinary. But when his anti-discursive bent was carried to an extreme, the final result could prove infuriating. He was prone to reading both nature and society as inspired palimpsests or "texts." As he remarks in *The Arcades Project*, "The expression 'the book of nature' indicates that one can read the real like a text." The types of empirical observations that he had in mind were rarely self-explanatory.

This was a decidedly unempiricist kind of empiricism, as Adorno discovered upon receiving the "manuscript" of *The Arcades Project*, which essentially consisted of Benjamin's working notebooks. It contained thousands of fascinating and suggestive citations culled from predominantly French sources that Benjamin had consulted during years of painstaking research at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Yet the theoretical "glue" that would allow the pieces of the *Arcades* to cohere into a meaningful whole seemed all but absent. "At the beginning of the previous year [1948] I finally received the arcades material that had been hidden in the Bibliothèque Nationale," Adorno wrote to Scholem.

> Last summer I worked through the material exhaustively, and problems arose that I must discuss with you. The most difficult aspect is the *extraordinary inattention to theoretically formulated ideas as opposed to the enormous store of excerpts*. That may in part be explained from the idea that was explicitly expressed on one occasion (and which to me is problematical) that the work should be merely "assembled"; that is, compiled from citations, such that the theory leaps forth without one having to append it as interpretation. Were that to have been possible, only Benjamin himself would have been able to accomplish it; whereas I have always been faithful to the standpoint of the Hegelian *Phenomenology of Spirit*, according to which the movement of the concept, of the matter itself, is coincident with the explicit thought process of the reflecting subject. Only the authority of sacred texts would stand as a refutation of this conception, and the *Arcades Project* has avoided precisely this idea. If one takes, as I would like, the montage idea not entirely *à la lettre*, it might have easily turned out that Benjamin's ideas could have been formed from countless citations.

One can imagine Adorno's heart sinking when he came across the following bold declaration of intent in Convolute N of the *Arcades*, "On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress" (Adorno labelled the files "convolutes," based on the German term for "bundle," and the irony in the English is entirely apt): "Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't *say* anything. Merely show. I will purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them."

In fact, it does not seem that Benjamin seriously contemplated fashioning *The Arcades Project* from a montage of citations; but Adorno's misgivings were legitimate. In *The Arcades Project* one encounters the occasional breathtaking aperçu, but the contours and the proportions of the finished whole remain to this day unmanageable, and an object of conjecture. In their foreword to the present edition, Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin—whose labors of translation have been prodigious—implicitly take a stand against Adorno's skepticism. They perceive a positive "compositional principle at work," the aforementioned precept of montage; and so they liken *The Arcades Project* to kindred works from the same period, *One-Way Street* and *A Berlin Childhood Around 1900*. "What is distinctive about *The Arcades Project*," the translators suggest, "is the working of quotations within the framework of montage, so much so that they eventually far outnumber the commentaries."

Surely Eiland and McLaughlin are attempting, rather transparently, to make a virtue out of a necessity. (In this, they are following the precedent of Benjamin's German publishers, who sought to compare *The Arcades Project* with Schlegel's *Philosophical Apprenticeships* and Nietzsche's *Will to Power*.) But the quotations in the *Arcades Project* are not like the quotations in Benjamin's other works, in that they remain entirely unintegrated. Try as one might, one searches in vain for an organizing principle or a guiding precept. This is not montage, this is sheer arbitrariness. As Susan Buck-Morss observed in her exhaustive survey of the work in *The Dialectics of Seeing*, the 900 pages of fragments in their thirty-six Convolutes provide "insufficient evidence as to the overall conception that guided Benjamin's research." Buck-Morss concluded that "the *Passagen-Werk* itself *does not exist*."

II.

THERE IS ANOTHER reason for the impenetrability of *The Arcades Project*. It is that Benjamin's own conception underwent a number of crucial transformations. Buffeted about the continent during the dark decade prior to the European catastrophe, his approach to his grand and arcane enterprise seemed to alter in accordance with his changing personal and political fortunes.

Benjamin once described *The Arcades Project* as "the theater of all my struggles and all my ideas." As he wrote to Scholem in 1928, his work begins to "howl . . . in my nights in the manner of a small beast if I do not take it to drink at the most distant sources." So the obvious question arises: why was it that Benjamin elected to endow the material culture of nineteenth-century Paris—railroads, panoramas, barricades, exhibitions, city streets, gas lighting, the stock exchange—with such world-historical meaning? And what relevance would his peculiar obsession with a quaint yet antiquated nineteenth-century building form—the arcades—have for the momentous political struggles of the Popular Front era, with

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which Benjamin was so concerned during this period of his life?

After all, Benjamin viewed *The Arcades Project* as a type of political intervention. Speaking of his intentions for his work, he observed: "The Copernican revolution in historical perception is as follows ... *Politics* attains primacy over *history*." Whatever one thinks of such an understanding of what Copernicus wrought, it is clear that the entries of *The Arcades Project* were arcana of an activist kind: Benjamin was not attempting to recoup the past for its own sake, but as a part of a social and cultural contestation. A few years earlier, in *One-Way Street*, he felicitously characterized his new self-understanding as a writer and a critic as a "strategist in the literary struggle."

A quick glance at the headings for the various files piques one's curiosity and adds to the confusion. There are the "methodological" Convolutes, in which Benjamin reflects on his various theoretical objectives. These files are concerned with the writings of Fourier, Baudelaire, Proust, Marx, Jung, and the surrealists, all of whom provided major sources of conceptual inspiration. But the most important methodological file is clearly Convolute N, "Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress." Here Benjamin discusses the cryptic relationship between "dreaming" and "awakening," and underlines the importance of the visual or "imagistic" component of the project, and, with stunning frankness, concedes the epistemological centrality of "theology" to its overall success.

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The Passage de l'Opéra, 1822–23

An examination of Convolute N makes clear that what Benjamin sought was a utopian revitalization of Marxism. The thousands of jottings in *The Arcades Project* are the jottings of an eschatologist. In Benjamin's view, insofar as orthodox Marxism had itself succumbed to a host of economic and scientific prejudices (rendering Marxism itself "bourgeois"), only a massive infusion of aesthetic and messianic concepts could redeem it, and make it useful. There is something touching about Benjamin's belief that this kind of work could be useful. It was the enabling delusion of his work. From *The Arcades Project*, surely, no state and no system had anything to fear.

The following musings from Convolute N are representative of Benjamin's theoretical concerns, as well as of his philosophical "micrology"—the art of discerning the major tendencies of an epoch from its apparently most trivial manifestations. As Benjamin puts it: "In what way is it possible to conjoin a heightened 'graphicness' to the realization of the Marxist method? The first stage in this undertaking will be to carry over the principle of montage into history. That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of *the smallest and most precisely cut components*. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment *the crystal of the total event*."

Yet the bulk of the Convolutes contain only the so-called "material elements" for Benjamin's study—citations and empirical observations pertaining to the material culture of nineteenth-century Paris. A partial list of the file-names gives a good idea of Benjamin's themes: "Arcades," "Fashion," "Exhibitions," "The Interior," "Haussmannization," "Dream City and Dream House, Dreams of the Future," "The Flâneur," "Prostitution, Gambling," "Panorama," "Photography." In these files Benjamin was at pains to establish a meaningful correlation between the phenomenal manifestations of nineteenth-century Parisian life and the economic sphere—or, bluntly put, "capital."

In this way, he wished to amplify a fundamental Marxian notion: that industrial capitalism heralded an age of leisure and abundance, but its utopian potential remained distorted and repressed owing to the "relations of production"—the injustices of "class society." This is one of the reasons that Benjamin took the writings of the utopian socialists—Fourier, Owen, Saint-Simon—so seriously. He believed that their doctrines contained "wish images" and "dream fantasies" of a future classless society. To its detriment, orthodox Marxism—which under Stalinism had congealed into a repressive "science of legitimation"—had trivialized them as a band of quixotic charlatans.

Aware of the pitfalls of "vulgar Marxism," Benjamin was also at pains to avoid a deterministic reading of nineteenth-century material culture—that is, an interpretation that linked culture directly with economic developments. One of his avenues of escape from this standard Marxist trap was the category of "expression." As he remarks, "On the doctrine of the ideological superstructure: ... if the infrastructure in a certain way determines the superstructure, but if such determination is not reducible to simple reflection, how is it then ... to be characterized? As its *expression*. The superstructure is the expression of the infrastructure." In practice, alas, Benjamin's efforts were often indistinguishable from the vulgar Marxism that he scorned.

A few illustrations culled from the "material" Convolutes will exemplify what Benjamin had in mind. In the Convolute on the "Arcades," he observes: "People associated the 'genius of the Jacobins with the genius of the industrials,' but they also attributed to Louis-Philippe the saying: 'God be praised, and my shops too.' The arcades as temples of commodity capital." In this way, Benjamin sought to point out the fact that the "use-value" of the

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arcades (as a potential locus of material plenty) had been vitiated by considerations of "exchange value." A few pages later, he appends a related notion, also meant to illustrate the destructive predominance of the commodity form: "[Sigfried] Giedion shows (in *Building in France*, p. 35) how the axiom, 'Welcome the crowd and keep it seduced,' leads to corrupt architectural practices in the construction of the department store Au Printemps (1881-1889). *Function of commodity capital!*"

In the course of his discussion of "Prostitution and Gambling" in Convolute O, Benjamin offers a number of analogous observations. The dramatic upsurge in prostitution during the Second Empire bears on the way that, under capitalism, "love" had been systematically reduced to a commodity: "Regarding the influence of fashion on erotic life, a telling observation by Eduard Fuchs: 'Women of the Second Empire do not say, 'I love him,' but rather, 'I fancy him'—*J'ai un caprice pour lui.*" And, a few pages later, more pithily and directly: "Love for the prostitute is the apotheosis of empathy with the commodity."

The proliferation of gambling during Louis Philippe's reign moves Benjamin, somewhat predictably, to stress a similar set of ideas. For Benjamin, gambling was illustrative—literally and metaphorically—of the degradation of experience in modern commodity culture. To demonstrate this point, he cites the following observations by the French philosopher Alain:

> The basic principle . . . of gambling . . . consists in this: . . . that each round is independent of the one preceding . . . . Gambling strenuously denies all acquired conditions, all antecedents . . . pointing to previous actions; and that is what distinguishes it from work. Gambling rejects . . . this weighty past which is the mainstay of work, and which makes for seriousness of purpose, for attention to the long term, for right, and for power.

Gambling, then, is thus merely another instance of industrial capitalism's tendency to supplant qualitative experience with quantitative experience. In games of chance, experience and tradition count for nothing. The accumulation of "wisdom" is pointless; with every roll of the dice, the gambler must begin anew. Thus gambling becomes a parable of a more general disintegration of experience—as well as of the capacity to "have experiences"—under modern capitalism: wage labor (and, ultimately, assembly-line production) replaces craftsmanship; art becomes a commodity or "kitsch"; and "information," as purveyed by journalists, supplants the art of storytelling.

As these examples show, the direct correlations between culture and economics that Benjamin sought to avoid came back to haunt his analysis. His concept of "expression" failed to ensure that the mediations between "superstructure" and "base" remained subtle and complex. Instead, too often, the citations or the "material elements" of *The Arcades Project*, which constitute the preponderance of the published text, serve as knee-jerk exemplifications of prior and wholly unexamined economic concepts.

It was this practice, moreover, that alienated Adorno from Benjamin's most substantial draft for *The Arcades Project*, the fragment called "Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire." "Unless I am very much mistaken," comments Adorno,

> your dialectic lacks one thing: *mediation*. Throughout your text there is a tendency to relate the pragmatic contents of Baudelaire's work directly to adjacent features in the social history of his time, preferably economic features. I have in mind the passage about the duty on wine, certain statements about the barricades, or the . . . passage about the arcades, which I find particularly problematic . . . . I regard it as methodologically unfortunate to give conspicuous individual features from the realm of the superstructure a "materialistic" turn by relating them immediately and perhaps even causally to corresponding features of the infrastructure. Materialist determination of cultural traits is only possible if it is mediated through the *total social process*.

By relying on a "wide-eyed presentation of facts," concludes Adorno, Benjamin risked depriving the phenomena of their "real historico-philosophical weight."

"If one wished to put it very drastically," Adorno bluntly and brilliantly concluded, "one could say that your study is located at the crossroads of magic and positivism. That spot is bewitched. Only theory could break the spell." But the spell was not broken. And Benjamin has worked his spell upon the scholars of his work and his influence, most of whom write about Benjamin as if they, too, are caught in Benjamin's trance.

III.

In a letter to Adorno (translated for the first time in their *Complete Correspondence*) in 1935, Benjamin reflected on the genesis of *The Arcades Project*: "There stands [Louis] Aragon at the very beginning—*Le Paysan de Paris*, of which I could never read more than two or three pages in bed at night before my heart started to beat so strongly that I had to lay the book aside. What a warning! . . . . And yet my first sketches for the Arcades date from that time."

In fine surrealist fashion, Aragon had transformed Paris into a locus of magical occurrences and chance encounters. With its topographical allure, the city itself became one of the novel's main "personages." Inanimate locations and entities assumed an enchanted precedence over the novel's somnambulant human characters.

The first half of Aragon's novel, moreover, takes place in an arcade that was slated for demolition (a fact that is crucial, given Benjamin's preoccupation with "ruins"), the *Passage de l'Opéra*. "Our cities are populated with unrecognized sphinxes," Aragon declares, "who will not stop the passing dreamer to ask him life and death questions unless he directs his distracted meditations toward them." Among these "sphinxes," continues Aragon, are the *passages* or arcades: "human aquaria, already stripped of their original life, [that] merit consideration as *repositories of modern myths*."

Following the rejection in 1925 of *The Origins of German Tragic Drama*, his qualifying thesis at the University of Frankfurt, Benjamin abandoned his interest in German studies. It was the French literary avant-garde that now exercised his imagination. As he put it in a letter in 1927: "whereas in Germany I feel entirely isolated among the men of my generation, there are isolated presences in France—especially Aragon and the surrealist movement—in which I see things at work that concern me." Inspired by his reading of Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, Benjamin had also changed his political orientation and recently declared his interest in "radical communism"; and his turning toward France and cultural modernism made sense for the new Marxist, too.

Aragon's celebration of the arcades and his astute surrealist eye for the stuff of "modern myth" provided the catalyst for Benjamin's decision to produce a work on the Paris arcades, which were glass-roofed shopping palaces that first emerged during the 1820s. Its leitmotif would be "the primal history of the nineteenth century" or the nineteenth century as "primal history." Benjamin was concerned not with the reemergence of "prehistorical elements" in the modern period. Instead he sought to highlight the way in which modern commodity culture assumed a mythological—or, as he sometimes called it, a

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"phantasmagorical"—cast, mesmerizing the masses into a stupor that effectively sapped their will to revolt. As Benjamin observes in Convolute K of the *Arcades* ("Dream City and Dream House, Dreams of the Future"): "Capitalism was a natural phenomenon with which a new dream-filled sleep came over Europe, and, through it, a *reactivation of mythic forces*."

The regression of "history" to the condition of a rigid and lifeless "natural history" or "myth"—a conception that Benjamin had developed in the earlier book on German tragedy—thus became one of the central themes of the *Arcades*. From this perspective, the arcades themselves, which primarily stocked luxury items and anticipated the modern department store, embodied for him the apotheosis of consumerist *divertissement* or socially engendered "false consciousness"; they signified, as he felicitously puts it in one of his early notes, a "primordial landscape of consumption." "Architecture as the most important testimony to latent mythology," Benjamin remarks in the "First Sketches" for the *Arcades* sometime in the late 1920s. "And the most important architecture of the nineteenth century is the arcades."

WITH THE *Arcades Project* Benjamin attempted to marry surrealism to socialism, André Breton to Karl Marx. Sifting through Marx's juvenilia, he discovered an aside in a letter of 1843 that suggested an affinity between Marxism and the surrealist celebration of dream experience. "The world has long been dreaming of something," wrote Marx, "which it can acquire if it becomes conscious of it." The dialectical interrelationship between these two states, dreaming and waking, would become the *Arcades*' methodological signature. As Benjamin would declare in a revealing passage, "the utilization of dream elements upon awaking is the canon of dialectics."

With great originality, Marx had described capitalism's mythological and phantasmagorical side in his discussion of "commodity fetishism." Commodity production engendered an inverted world in which "things," qua commodities, functioned as the prime movers, and men and women were degraded to personifications of economic categories. (The reality that Marx dissected survives in our somewhat Orwellian phrase "human capital," so popular among managerial types and shills for "globalization.") Whereas a commodity, as Marx observed in *Capital*, initially appears as "a very trivial thing [that] is easily understood," upon closer scrutiny it abounds in "theological subtleties and metaphysical niceties." For under conditions of advanced capitalism, in which commodity production is the rule, the "the relation of the producers to the product of their labor is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labor.... There it is a definite relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, *the fantastic form of a relation between things*."

In these passages, Marx propounded the classical definition of "reification"—literally, to turn into a thing. This notion would become one of the guiding concepts for the Frankfurt School. During the 1930s, Benjamin would publish many of his key studies in the Frankfurters' journal, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. They in turn supported him financially throughout his difficult years of exile.

Both Benjamin and the Frankfurt School were "cultural Marxists," a description that is less problematic than it may first appear. Orthodox Marxism, with which Benjamin shared few affinities, understood itself as an empirical science based on economics. Following World War I, however, it experienced a crisis: although all the "objective" conditions for revolutionary change seemed to be present in Europe, revolution itself had succeeded only in backward Russia—a far cry from the scenario Marx had envisioned. In order better to understand the non-revolutionary nature of the European proletariat, the Frankfurt School elected to

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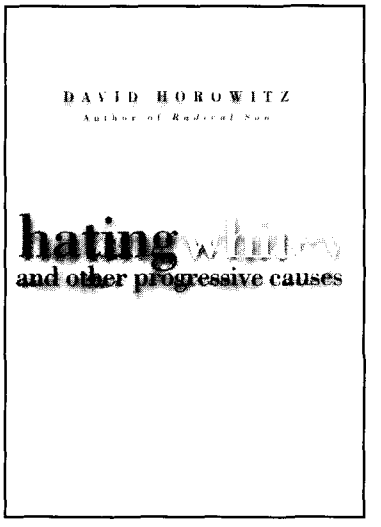

"Indignant Sanity"

"Horowitz is as much despised among [racial intellectuals] as Whittaker Chambers was at Georgetown dinner parties during the Alger Hiss case years ago. Among racial intellectuals, Horowitz is "Not Our Class, Dear." *Hating Whitey*—with its inflammatory title—deserves a reading. Horowitz is angry and polemical, but he is also a clear and ruthless thinker. What he says has an indignant sanity about it. For cautionary perspective in an argument like this, it pays to remember that Hiss was guilty and Chambers was right."

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focus on the so-called "subjective factor" or the "reification of consciousness." For thinkers such as Horkheimer, Adorno, and Benjamin, it was the blandishments of bourgeois culture—phenomena that fell beneath the radar scope of orthodox Marxism and its scientific pretensions—that had seduced the masses into passively accepting their condition of hallucinatory narcosis. The "unhappy consciousness" of the nineteenth-century industrial proletariat had been supplanted by the "happy consciousness" of twentieth-century consumer society.

BENJAMIN'S ATTEMPT TO marry Marx and Breton was very strained. His own attitudes toward both legacies were characterized by extreme ambivalence. For Benjamin, who once declared the worthlessness of "any theory that cannot deduce the nature of the absolute from reading coffee grounds," the temperamental abyss separating him from the reigning variants of Marxist orthodoxy remained profound. During the late 1920s, he was keenly interested in progressive developments among the Soviet cultural avant-garde (especially film, theater, and experiments in proletarian literature). Yet in many ways *The Arcades Project* sought, through the intermediary of surrealism, to reinvent Marxist philosophy in toto. In Benjamin's eyes, nothing less than a wholesale transfiguration would do. Little wonder, then, that his thought during this period found few echoes among fellow leftists.

Benjamin also harbored strong misgivings about surrealism. His political reservations had surfaced in his essay "Surrealism" in 1929, whose centrality for *The Arcades Project* would be difficult to exaggerate. (He once described it as a "prolegomenon to *The Arcades Project*.") Benjamin was attracted by surrealism's efforts to surmount the beautiful illusions of bourgeois aestheticism, or "art for art's sake." Surrealism had sought, in the manner of earlier avant-gardes, to merge art with everyday life. "The writings of this circle are not literature," Benjamin had proclaimed approvingly, "but something else: demonstrations, watchwords, documents, bluffs, forgeries." "*To win the powers of intoxication for the revolution*—this is the project around which surrealism circles in all its books and enterprises."

This formulation is important, for it shows how, for Benjamin, the meaning of "revolution" (and, ultimately, of *The Arcades Project*) was inextricably bound to the notion of "experience" (*Erfahrung*), which, since his youth, had been one of the defining terms of his philosophical lexicon. After the revolution, everyday life would consist of a series of "profane illuminations"—at which point one could throw away the hash pipe, as it were. (Following Baudelaire's fascination with "artificial paradise," Benjamin experimented with hashish and mescaline, and kept a detailed record of his experiences). Yet Benjamin feared—correctly—that surrealism remained ensconced in the values of bourgeois aestheticism; and so it would prove unable to accommodate itself to what he ominously called the "constructive, dictatorial side of revolution."

The "theoretical" disagreement between Benjamin and surrealism concerned the status of "modern mythology." Whereas surrealism tended to venerate the phantasmagoria of modern life for its own sake, Benjamin's attitude was more ambivalent and "dialectical": in his view, the cultural superstructure of late capitalism served up riddles and enigmas that could become fruitful only if they were critically decoded. This demystification was the task of "materialist criticism," as Benjamin understood it. In Benjamin's view, the surrealists remained too satisfied with the enchanted veneer of modern life, failing to penetrate to the level of essence or "disenchantment."

IN ADDITION TO the surrealists, Benjamin found two additional literary sources of inspiration for *The Arcades Project*. The first was Proust, portions of whose *A La Recherche du temps perdu* Benjamin had translated into German during the early 1920s. Proust's theory of remembrance provided Benjamin with a powerful model for the redemption of past experience, albeit in individual terms. (Benjamin, of course, focused primarily on the problem of collective experience).

Benjamin had made excellent use of Proust's doctrines in *A Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, his inspired collection of childhood reminiscences and reflections. In Proust, Benjamin thought he had discovered a kindred spirit: a writer who, starting from the most seemingly trivial everyday circumstances and events, could achieve, through the magic of remembrance, a state of happiness or fulfillment. In his notes for *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin underlines the relationship between Proust's theory of memory and his own utopian historiographical intentions. To begin with, observes Benjamin, "facts [are] something that just now happened to us, first struck us; to establish them is the affair of memory." "Awakening," he continues,

> is the great exemplar of memory: the occasion on which it is given us to remember what is closest, tritest, most obvious. What Proust intends with the experimental rearrangement of furniture in matinal half-slumber, what [Ernst] Bloch recognizes as the 'darkness of the lived moment,' is nothing other than what here [in *The Arcades Project*] is to be secured on the level of the historical, and collectively.

Of even greater moment than the influence of Proust was the influence of Baudelaire, whom Benjamin lionized as "a lyric poet in the era of high capitalism." As a consummate allegorist of the modern metropolis, Baudelaire was able to transform scenes of urban dilapidation into the stuff of inspired reverie. By imaginatively transfiguring the commonplaces of daily life, he was able to redeem modernity's tantalizing, yet jealously guarded, *promesse de bonheur*.

THE OBLIQUE RELATIONSHIP between destitution and the sublime that so preoccupied Baudelaire also remained one of Benjamin's foremost obsessions. Whereas the "mythologist" remained ensnared by modernity as phantasmagoria Baudelaire allegorically surmounted the immediacy of bourgeois decay in the direction of transcendent images and visions. As Benjamin observes in "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century":

> Baudelaire's genius, which drew its nourishment from melancholy, was an allegorical one. With Baudelaire, Paris for the first time became the subject of lyrical poetry. This poetry is no local folklore; the allegorist's gaze which falls upon the city is rather the gaze of alienated man. It is the gaze of the *flâneur*, whose way of living still bestowed a conciliatory gleam over the growing destitution of men in the great city.

In his great essay "The Painter of Modern Life," Baudelaire proclaimed that the modernist's task must be "to extract from fashion whatever element it may contain of poetry within history, to distill the eternal from the transitory"—a statement that in great measure corresponded to Benjamin's program for the *Arcades*. Benjamin allocated 180 pages to Baudelaire, but only 30 pages or so are concerned with Marx. In the late 1930s, Benjamin seriously considered devoting a separate monograph to Baudelaire. The drafts for this study, "Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" (published separately in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*), are probably the best example of what the *Arcades Project*, had it been completed, might have looked like.

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IV.

To reconsider the relationship between Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin is to reflect on one of the most enduring philosophical friendships of the twentieth century. Born in 1903, Adorno was Benjamin's junior by nine years. The two met in Frankfurt in the early 1920s. The younger man, destined to become one of the major philosophers of postwar Germany, was quick to recognize Benjamin's mercurial brilliance. Several years after Benjamin's qualifying thesis had been summarily rejected (one professor remarked that he "hadn't understood a word of it"), Adorno, as a *Privatdozent* in philosophy, sought to avenge his friend's ill-treatment by offering a seminar on the *Trauerspiel* book over the course of two semesters.

But the event that solidified their bond was a meeting in 1928 in Frankfurt at which, in the company of Horkheimer, the Latvian director Asja Lacis, and Gretel Karplus (Adorno's future wife), Benjamin read aloud to Adorno excerpts from the early drafts for *The Arcades Project*, which at the time bore the fanciful subtitle: "A Dialectical Fairy Tale." The notes that Benjamin read on that occasion sketched the conceptual foundations of the enterprise: the revealing correspondences between "modernity" and "myth"; the image of the nineteenth century as "hell"; and, most importantly, Benjamin's provocative reflections on the relationship between "dreaming" and "awakening" that would become the theoretical cornerstone of the *Arcades* in its later form.

Still, as Benjamin would remark to Adorno in an important letter in 1935, this early conception suffered from a number of methodological deficiencies. It betrayed an overly "rhapsodic character" (as indicated by the enchanted subtitle) and an "archaic form of philosophizing naïvely caught up in nature." According to Benjamin, their "historical" meeting in 1928 changed all that: "There would henceforth be no more rhapsodic naïveté." Adorno's sober counsel, which urged a more historical focus, motivated Benjamin to propel "the entire conceptual mass of this material . . . towards a final shape in which the world of dialectical images is immune to all objections that can be raised by metaphysics." At Adorno's urging, the project would abandon its original mythological cast and evolve into a genuinely materialist endeavor.

For Benjamin, the 1930s were years of extreme hardship. On his fortieth birthday, faced with a variety of intellectual and personal setbacks, he contemplated suicide. Forced into exile following the Nazi seizure of power, he continued to publish in German for a time under various pseudonyms. But his mishaps seemed to outweigh his successes, and his slim hopes of establishing a place for himself in the Parisian literary scene also came to naught. Increasingly, his subsistence depended on a stipend that he received from Horkheimer's Institute for Social Research in New York. The *Complete Correspondence* with Adorno reveals what a selfless and instrumental role the young philosopher played in keeping Benjamin afloat during these difficult times. As the precipice of war neared, Adorno repeatedly intervened in timely fashion with potential benefactors as well as Horkheimer's Institute on Benjamin's behalf. In most cases, his efforts were remarkably successful.

PHOTO BY GISÈLE FREUND

Walter Benjamin at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1937

Unsurprisingly, the bulk of their philosophical colloquy concerned *The Arcades Project*. At times, it seemed that Adorno had more invested in the project than Benjamin himself. As he wrote to Benjamin in 1935: "I view the Arcades project as not only the center of your philosophy, but the decisive standard of what can be articulated philosophically today; as a *chef d'oeuvre*, nothing else, and so decisive in every way . . . that I would view as catastrophic and absolutely incorrigible any lessening of the inner promise of this work and any sacrifice of your own categories." For his part, Benjamin was forced, time and again, to stave off a variety of intellectual and material distractions in order to concentrate fully on the work.

In 1935, material considerations of a highly undialectical kind—he was broke—motivated Benjamin to formulate the first substantial outline of *The Arcades Project*, "Paris, The Capital of the Nineteenth Century." He drafted this text, which is frequently referred to as the Arcades Exposé, at Adorno's urging, to shore up his claim on financial support from Horkheimer's Institute. For a short time, Benjamin ceased filling his precious Convolutes with enticing citations and began to delineate his major ideas. The richness of the result was beyond dispute, but it was a decidedly mixed bag. Adorno, who had been urging its composition, felt intellectually betrayed.

To be sure, many of the provocative, central ideas from the late 1920s remained; but Benjamin had imposed a network of new categories drawn from some extremely dubious intellectual sources: the reactionary doctrines of C. G. Jung and Ludwig Klages. And Adorno's theoretical instincts proved surer than Benjamin's: within a few years both Jung and Klages would disgrace themselves by becoming vigorous supporters of Germany's Brown Revolution. It had long been one of Benjamin's central philosophical goals to reformulate approaches to "experience" popular among right-wing thinkers for the ends of the political left; but as the 1935 version of the Arcades Exposé clearly demonstrated, this approach harbored considerable perils and risks. Benjamin was playing with messianic and mythical fire.

The most controversial elements of the 1935 Exposé, and the passages from which Adorno most recoiled, appear in the opening section, called "Fourier, or the Arcades." After citing Michelet's claim, "each epoch dreams the one to follow," Benjamin continues:

> Corresponding to the form of the new means of production, which in the beginning is ruled by the old (Marx), are

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> images in the collective consciousness in which the old and the new interpenetrate. These images are wish images; in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production. At the same time, what emerges in these wish images is the resolute effort to distance oneself from all that is antiquated—which includes the most recent past. These tendencies deflect the imagination (which is given impetus by the new) back upon the primal past. In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor, the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history (*Urgeschichte*)—that is, to elements of a classless society. And the experiences of such a society—as stored in the collective unconscious—engender, through interpenetration with what is new, the utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions.

Upon reading these lines, Adorno concluded that Benjamin had abandoned the materialist and historical program for *The Arcades Project* that had formed the crux of their philosophical partnership. Benjamin's speculations looked reckless. In Adorno's view, he had replaced the original, historical concept of "dialectical images" with the static notion of "archaic images" borrowed from Klages, and had substituted Jung's idealistic notion of the "collective unconscious" for the Marxian notion of "class consciousness," which alone could legitimate the *Arcades* in "materialist" terms and thus surmount the avowedly mythological approach of "A Dialectical Fairy Tale." Benjamin was indeed an avid reader of Klages, whom he visited in Munich in 1914. As early as 1926, he termed an intellectual confrontation with Klages "indispensable"; and four years later, writing to Scholem, he described *Intellect as Antagonist of the Soul* (Klages' bombastic, unreadable magnum opus) as a "great philosophical work."

Adorno felt that the situation demanded strict intellectual forthrightness. "The collective consciousness is invoked," he lamented in response,

> but I fear that in its present form this concept cannot be distinguished from Jung's concept of the same. It is open to criticism from both sides: from the perspective of the social process because it hypostatizes archaic images, whereas in fact dialectical images are generated by the commodity character, not in some archaic collective ego but amongst alienated bourgeois individuals; and from the perspective of psychology because, as Horkheimer puts it, a mass ego only properly exists in earthquakes and catastrophes.

Adorno would display little more tolerance for the passages in the Exposé that were inspired by Benjamin's sympathetic reading of Klages. By conceiving prehistory as a positive touchstone in the form of a "classless society" or a "Golden Age," Benjamin had lost contact with the nature of the historical present—above all, with the way it was determined by the commodity form. For this reason, Adorno believed, his vaunted dialectical images—the "wish images" and furtive "utopias" that he described in the Arcades Exposé—had become indistinguishable from the reactionary and obscurantist archaic images that suffused Klages' pompous tomes.

BENJAMIN SEEMED REMARKABLY unfazed by Adorno's sweeping and meticulous critical indictment. Notorious for his "Chinese politeness," he spoke instead of the "joy" that "it gives me to see our friendship so confirmed and so many friendly conversations renewed through this letter of yours." "All of your reflections," he continued, "go precisely to the productive heart of the issue, and hardly a single one fails to do so." It is doubtful that such professions of solidarity placated Adorno.

In fact, later in his letter, Benjamin responded to Adorno's challenges in a way that could only have heightened his friend's concerns. After denying that the 1935 Exposé in any way constituted a betrayal, Benjamin conceded that it indeed lacked something essential: "the constructive moment," the principle of organization that would compel the welter of illuminations to coalesce into a meaningful whole. But it was Benjamin's ensuing analogical characterization of how that moment might be produced that likely caused Adorno's hair to stand on end: "One thing is quite certain: *what the constructive moment means for this book must be compared with what the philosopher's stone means for alchemy.*"

Alchemy was not exactly what a historical materialist such as Adorno had in mind. But Benjamin's unguarded allusion to the "philosopher's stone" and "alchemy" as methodological ideals for *The Arcades Project* was hardly a meaningless aside. It revealed three things of overwhelming importance about his theoretical intentions. It indicated his profound ambivalence concerning the sociological or "materialist" framework that Adorno and others were urging him to pursue. It conveyed how close his thinking about the project remained during the mid-1930s to the more "phantasmagorical" approach of 1927–1928. And it illustrated the extent to which Benjamin's thinking, even at the height of his so-called "materialist" phase, remained irretrievably and profoundly marked by the theological categories of his youth.

Benjamin confessed in a letter to a friend in 1931 that "I have never been able to do research and think in any sense other than, if you will, *a theological one*: namely, in accord with the Talmudic teaching about the *forty-nine levels of meaning in every Torah passage*." For all his talk about producing a new "materialist historiography" and the "primal history of the nineteenth century," it is remarks such as this one that provide us with the real key to Benjamin's ambition in *The Arcades Project*. It *was* theology—a secular theology of redemption in an age catastrophically obsessed with redemption.

V.

IN THE SUMMER of 1940, as Western Europe succumbed to the fascist onslaught, Benjamin grabbed some of his precious manuscripts and fled Paris for the unoccupied zone, from which he hoped eventually to make his way across the Atlantic. Among his papers were the celebrated "Theses On the Philosophy of History," which he described as "theoretical accoutrements" for his "work on Baudelaire," and which stand in the closest proximity to his methodological plans for *The Arcades Project*. (Virtually everything he wrote during the final decade of his life, including the wonderful essays on Kafka, Proust, and Leskov, are related to the intellectual climate of *The Arcades Project*.)

In his "Theses," Benjamin took aim at the delusions of "progress." "Nothing has corrupted the German workers' movement so much as the delusion that it was moving with the current," he observed at one point; and he proceeded to reflections on the failures of the Popular Front era, as symbolized by the Hitler-Stalin Pact. But it would be wrong to suggest that he was thinking about politics, at least in the ordinary sense. His overwhelming concern, at that exceedingly dark hour, was the relationship between history and redemption.

Since experience has taught that so little can be expected from the immanent course of history—which Benjamin characterized starkly as "one single catastrophe that keeps piling ruin upon ruin"—redemption must be construed, in his view, as a rupture in history. In the "Theses," the thinker running for his life described the nexus between history and redemption:

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> The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply.

And in the manner of an unconvincing afterthought, he hastily added: "Historical materialists are aware of this."

IT IS NOT hard to see that, if one softens the theological undertones, this statement faithfully describes Benjamin's theoretical intentions for *The Arcades Project*, which explicitly concerned the redemption of past experience. Benjamin fluctuated on the nature and degree of theology's role and involvement; but he never doubted for a moment that it would be a central one. For Benjamin, the domain of theology possessed a privileged avenue of access to the clandestine truth about the fulfillment of history—or as he sometimes called it, "Messianic time." The theological understanding of history was certainly superior to the existing secular and scientific understandings, Marxism included. As he avows emphatically in *The Arcades Project*: "My thinking is related to theology as blotting pad is related to ink. *It is saturated with it.*"

Benjamin attempted to explain what might be called his theological materialism with a parable. In the first of his "Theses," he tells of a chess-playing puppet constructed so that it would win every match, "answering each move of an opponent with a countermove." The secret of the puppet's success, Benjamin continues, lies in the fact that "actually, a little hunchback who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings." "One can imagine a philosophical counterpart to this device," suggests Benjamin. "The puppet called 'historical materialism' is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology—which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight."

Nowhere does Benjamin indicate more forcefully than in this exquisite little fable the necessary bond between theology and the profane achievements of the human mind. Each side in isolation risks losing its way: criticism remains mired in the unredeemed "creaturely" world, and theology loses contact with the sphere of profane life that is so urgently in need of its resuscitative powers. Benjamin was convinced that only a creative collision of theology and materialist criticism would redeem humanity.

IN CONVOLUTE N of *The Arcades Project*, he suggested that, in the practice of cultural history, "it is therefore of decisive importance that a new partition be applied to the initially excluded, negative component so that, by a displacement of the angle of vision ... a positive element emerges anew in it too—something different from that previously signified. And so on, ad infinitum, *until the entire past is brought into the present in a historical apocatastasis.*" "Apocatastasis" is a term that derives from the Jewish apocalyptical tradition. It designates the restoration of an original paradisiacal condition with the coming of the Messiah. Thus restored, things would resume their proper relations to each other; and the distortions caused by the "dream condition of the world" would be effaced.

Scholem astutely observed, concerning the redemptive dimension of Benjamin's work, that "the goal of Benjamin's 'dialectics of cultural history' is thus the abolition of the prevailing context of expression in favor of the original context of Being." So Benjamin's characterization of his methodological proposal as "modest" was a gross understatement. He was wholly and deadly serious about his eschatology, and he made it into the very foundation of *The Arcades Project*. He was studying the streets of Paris for the sake of the Messiah.

In 1937, in an exchange with Max Horkheimer faithfully recorded by Benjamin in his notes for *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin candidly formulated his messianism. Horkheimer, seeking to subdue Benjamin's redemptive ambitions, wrote coldly that "past injustice has occurred and is completed. The slain are really slain.... If one takes the lack of closure entirely seriously, one must believe in the Last Judgment." And how could one believe in the Last Judgment? But Benjamin did believe in it; he had no qualms about doing battle with the finality of history. History, he responded, "is not simply a science but also and not least a form of remembrance.... What science has 'determined,' remembrance can modify. Such mindfulness can make the incomplete (happiness) into something complete, and the complete (suffering) into something incomplete. That is theology; but in remembrance we have an experience that forbids us to conceive of history as fundamentally atheological, little as it may be granted us to try to write it with immediately theological concepts."

So the slain are not really slain: on the eve of the great slaughter, this was Benjamin's way of thinking. It is more than a little shocking. Persecuted by political messianism, Benjamin turned to political messianism. Benjamin's standpoint dangerously confused "justice" with "happiness," and thus openly courted the horrors of political messianism. For this reason, Benjamin's thought takes on a sad, cautionary meaning. For if there is anything that the history of the twentieth century has taught us—and there were some who had learned this terrible lesson already in the 1930s—it is that considerations of happiness must be carefully circumscribed by questions of justice; that utopia is an alibi for murder.

IN AN EARLY essay inspired by Georges Sorel, Benjamin made a distinction between "law-preserving" violence and "law-creating" violence; and "law-preserving violence," he declared, is the type of violence that lies at the basis of the modern constitutional state. Benjamin shunned political gradualism, and insisted that the aim of politics was the climax of history. He was an apocalyptic, and like all apocalyptics he believed that profane considerations of "justice" would be deservedly swept away with the advent of the messianic age. In many respects, Benjamin's political messianism is the "red thread" that unites the various phases of his work: literary-romantic, theological, and materialist. *This* is the Benjaminian trance.

There is an unspoken consensus among Benjamin scholars that his avowedly eschatological "diagnosis of the times" is an appropriate one; that present history is indeed best described by the category of "incessant catastrophe"; that some form of political messianism remains our best "hope"; that "revolutionary violence," under appropriate circumstances and in the right conditions, is justifiable. This consensus must be challenged. The messianic framework may have been common to the interwar generation of Central European Jews who had all but abandoned the hope for gradual and non-convulsive historical change, but surely it remains drastically out-of-step with the justly chastened demands of the political and historical present. It is past time for Benjamin enthusiasts the world over to acknowledge this fact, and to discuss their hero more soberly. For what he propounded was—in Max Weber's famous cautionary phrase—an "ethic of ultimate ends." For Weber, Bolshevism was the archetype of this immoral indifference to means, and to the human costs of political ideals; and against the eschaton, he ardently defended an "ethic of responsibility." But it is impossible to square Benjamin's inflamed political messianism

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with the prosaic demands of an ethic of responsibility. And this makes Benjamin's work much less admirable and much less useful.

In March 1938, Gretel Adorno, seeking to lure Benjamin away momentarily from the recesses of the Bibliothèque Nationale, invited him to visit the Adornos in rain-soaked London. "You can probably hardly imagine how much I would love to see you over here," she remarked. "However, I harbor the single fear that you are so at home amongst your Arcades that you will never want to leave the splendid structure, and that it is only when you have finally closed the door on it that any other subject will catch your interest." Indeed, during the late 1930s, as the political world around him rapidly disintegrated, the Convolutes for the *Arcades* took on a near-talismanic importance for Benjamin. One might even say that he tried to fight the doom around him with this immense, esoteric labor of scholarly "apocatastasis."

In the end, however, his prodigious efforts failed. And we must not romanticize or monumentalize his failure. We would be wiser, instead, to receive *The Arcades Project* in the spirit of one of his own programmatic observations:

> To cultivate fields where, until now, only madness has reigned. Forge ahead with the whetted axe of reason, looking neither right nor left so as not to succumb to the horror that beckons from deep in the primeval forest. Every ground must at some point have been made arable by reason, must have been cleared of the undergrowth of delusion and myth. This is to be accomplished here for the terrain of the nineteenth century.

And for the twentieth century; and for the twenty-first century, too. But *The Arcades Project* too often honored reason in the breach. In the end, Walter Benjamin remained mesmerized by his "phantasmagoria" and his "wish images" and his "dream fantasies." As one leafs through his suggestive and seductive pages, one sees that there are not many traces in them of the "whetted axe of reason." Anyway, the preferred instrument of reason is not the axe. ■

The Limits of Language

By THOMAS NAGEL

Words and Rules: The Ingredients of Language by Steven Pinker

(Basic Books, 348 pp., $26)

WHAT MAKES language such a happy object of study is that it exists in all of us, and each of us can use himself as a source of data to confirm or disconfirm general theories about it. In this excellent work of popular science, Steven Pinker introduces contemporary psycholinguistics through the special topic of the English past tense, and the distinction between regular and irregular verbs.

"He lied as he lay down beside her" is the past tense of "He lies as he lies down beside her." The irregulars, apart from the highly individual *be* and *go*, tend to fall into patterns. *Shrink, shrank, [have] shrunk* goes with *drink, sink, stink; sleep, slept, slept* with *keep, creep, weep*. There is *blow, blew, blown; find, found, found; wear, wore, worn; hit, hit, hit*; and so on. But they have to be remembered individually. The regulars follow the rule "add *-ed*"—resulting in three different pronunciations, as in *lived, licked*, and *listed*, also governed by strict rules of phonology. The *-ed* rule takes over automatically when not blocked by an entrenched alternative, so it works for most verbs in the language, including new coinages, as in *Borked* and *faxed*, or verbs formed from nouns, as in "Shouts rang out from the crowd that ringed the speaker," or "The batter flied out to left field."

The irregular verbs are among those with the highest frequency in the language, which explains why they are remembered. Once an irregular form falls into infrequent use, it tends to be replaced by the regular, as *crew* has given way to *crowed*. The balance between the two mechanisms—individual memorization and application of the rule—is intriguingly illustrated by the so-called U-shaped learning curve followed by children. At first they acquire verb forms individually by memory, regulars and irregulars alike. Then, as they get the hang of the regular rule in their third year, they tend to overapply it, producing errors such as *goed* and *sended* that they didn't make earlier. Only after a few more years are these errors subdued by the force of irregular forms on memory. As Pinker says, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to compute it."

Pinker also has some discussion of plurals and related matters (such as why we say *still lifes* rather than *still lives*). And he tells us a lot about how the history of the language accounts for many of its properties, including the descent of many irregulars from earlier rules that are now defunct. For someone like myself, who becomes apoplectic upon encountering *criteria* and *data* treated as singulars, or *kudos* as the plural of *kudo*, this book is strangely soothing. Pinker is not immune to such feelings—he says he was barely able to contain himself while listening to a speaker refer repeatedly to the "alumnis" of his university—but he takes the long view. He quotes Jonathan Swift fulminating against the barbarians who in his day were not treating *-ed* as a separate syllable in words such as *disturbed* and *rebuked*. The fact that language joins ferocious normativity with radical contingency should encourage a certain relativism, and even tolerance, in all of us, even as we stick to our guns. Here, as in so many respects, civilization is in perpetual decline but is at the same time being perpetually reborn.

THE PROBLEM WITH Pinker's book is that it takes itself too seriously. Much of it revolves around a controversy among psychologists of language that outsiders will find boring—between a radical associationist view of the learning of grammar and the view, favored by Pinker, that the identification of formal rules with deductive consequences plays a large part in the process. Associationists try to explain everything in terms of phonetic or sometimes semantic similarities and dissimilarities among words. I have no reason to believe that Pinker has not presented the opposition in its best light, but it certainly seems like a pretty hopeless position in advance; he seems to be spending more ammunition than needed to persuade us that regular verbs provide a counterexample. Associationism is an old and bad idea about how the mind works in general, but it has recently been revived in the "connectionist" model of

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David Rumelhart and James McClelland, complete with computer simulations, and Pinker spends endless pages on its refutation. He offers the charming but dispiriting excuse that "as an experimental psychologist I have been trained not to believe anything unless it can be demonstrated in the laboratory on rats or sophomores."

It requires only a little reflection, however, to see that even though the mind operates partly by perceptions of similarity and difference, this cannot account for its capacity to apply precise concepts that subsume radically different cases, and to derive conclusions from them that mere similarity would never reveal. Mathematical and geometrical concepts are particularly clear examples, but many forms of mental operation in humans depend on a deductive logical structure. Reliance on the more primitive mechanism of association was one of the things that made B.F. Skinner's behavioristic reinforcement theory so limited as a way of understanding human beings, especially their use of language.

PINKER CERTAINLY SEEMS to establish that the regular English past tense, and various other grammatical rules, are learned not simply by association but through identification of a logical structure. Yet he greatly exaggerates the significance of this dispute by linking it to the venerable conflict between rationalism and empiricism: Descartes and Leibniz versus Locke and Hume. It is true that purely psychological hypotheses were part of what divided those figures of the past, but their more fundamental difference was epistemological: on what, if anything, can we base our claims to knowledge about the world? If, as seems clearly true of modern science, those claims go beyond our experiences, in what way are they nevertheless supported by those experiences? What additional contribution from a priori reason or understanding is needed to get beyond experience, and is such a thing available?

The dispute over the relative importance of rule-detection and memorization in the learning of grammar has nothing to do with this issue. The reason is that it has nothing to do with epistemology—that is, with the question of how our beliefs about the world can be justified. The truth about language depends on how people speak, but the truth about the natural world does not depend on what people believe. So there is a problem about the validity of our methods of belief formation that does not exist with regard to our methods of language learning: the problem is not just whether those methods are associative or logical, but whether they lead us to the truth.

The nature of the inborn, unlearned contribution to the process by which linguistic skills are acquired is of great psychological interest in itself, but it has no more implications for the justification of our knowledge of physics or biochemistry than do the nest-building instincts of the robin. The impulse to present empirical findings in psychology as the solutions to basic philosophical problems may be an occupational hazard of the field, but it is no more excusable than the urge of sociobiologists to offer moral insight.

Learning a grammatical system appears to depend on a distinct capacity, rather than on the application of a more general learning ability, associative or logical, to the special case of language. Evidence of this comes not only from the speed with which very small children accomplish the task, automatically and without any conscious formulation of the complex rules that they learn to obey. It comes also from the separability of this skill from other skills, through genetic deficit. There is a rare genetic defect called Williams Syndrome, whose victims stay in most respects at a mental age of around six or seven, but whose speech is extremely fluent, grammatically sophisticated, and rich in adult vocabulary. And there is a different genetic defect that results in great difficulty in learning to speak grammatically, but without comparable effects on other aspects of intelligence: such people have to memorize verb forms one by one. These data supplement the long-standing evidence for the complexity and the specificity of the language faculty from the different forms of aphasia caused by injury to different regions of the brain.

ALL WORK IN this area stems from or responds to the great contributions of Noam Chomsky, who posed the basic question of the size and the specificity of the innate contribution to language learning more than forty years ago. Since any normal human infant raised in the appropriate environment can, remarkably, learn any language whatever with ease, this innate contribution, whatever it is, must be universal. Chomsky proposed that there should be deeply buried universal features common to all languages, features that are in some sense correlative with this universal faculty, permitting any child to find the key when exposed to an example.

Pinker makes a stab at identifying a linguistic universal toward the end of his book, but it is only the phenomenon of a "default rule," governing all cases not governed by more specific, individually memorized formations. The regular past

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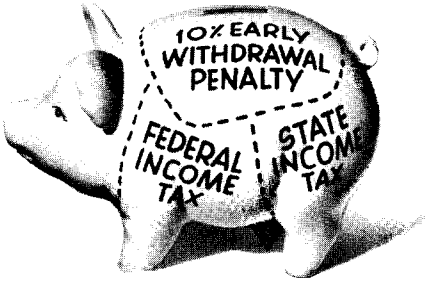

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tense is such a default rule in English. In Chinese, which is not inflected, Pinker identifies a default rule that supplies an all-purpose classifier, or a measure word, to go with nouns that are not assigned a specific classifier that has to be memorized. In English, we say "a piece of fruit," and "piece" is a classifier, but we do not need one with every noun. In Chinese, by contrast, a classifier is obligatory, and the default, Pinker reports, is *ge*. Fine, but it is hard to see this as the kind of deep similarity between the languages that would help explain why little children can pick them both up with ease.

Steven Pinker is a masterful explainer, a great collector of amusing examples, and smart. He ought to recognize that his subject is interesting enough in its own right, and that it does not need to be bolstered with inflated claims of deeper significance. ■

Dead Certainties

By RICHARD WHITE

Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans by Anthony F. C. Wallace

(Harvard University Press, 416 pp., $29.95)

The Ecological Indian: Myth and History by Shepard Krech III

(Norton, 318 pp., $27.95)

HISTORIANS FACE DOUBLE trouble. Their histories are supposed to be relevant to the concerns of their own time, if they want to find a general audience; they are supposed to speak about things that matter to *us*. Yet they are not supposed to be anachronistic. The past, remember, is a foreign country. It cannot be held to our standards, to modern standards.

Anthony Wallace and Shepard Krech are keenly alive to this dilemma. For Wallace, what is at issue is not so much Thomas Jefferson or the Indians, but the character of the United States. Have we been, through Jefferson, the modern architects of the sort of ethnic cleansing that we now condemn? Krech's subtext is more complicated. Indians have been adopted by environmentalists as ecological saints; but in truth they are neither conservationists nor ecologists, in which case it may be pointless to look for environmental inspiration beyond the closed circle of technology and the market that seems to define modernity these days.

Both books, then, flirt with anachronism, describing the events that they examine in twentieth-century terms such as "ethnic cleansing" and "conservation" that would have had little meaning for the people they are discussing. In less able hands, "ecological Indians" and "cultural genocide" could create cartoon histories in which people are ripped from the context of their own time and culture to provide easy lessons for our own. But both Wallace and Krech grant their subjects considerable complexity. These are serious books.

Jefferson and the Indians is not in a class with Anthony Wallace's best work, but then his best work, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, which appeared in 1969, is very nearly in a class by itself: even now few books make Indians into such complex historical figures, and even fewer books locate them so firmly in the modern world. Whatever Wallace writes is worth reading; but this time he offers the rather predictably paradoxical Jefferson. In Wallace's account, Jefferson is both the "admirer of Indian character, archaeology, and language ... [and] the planner of cultural genocide, the architect of the removal policy, the surveyor of the trail of tears." He is the despoiler and the murderer of Indian peoples, who, washing his hands, appears at his victims' funeral to deliver an eloquent eulogy—less as a hypocrite than as a gifted, complicated, and deeply flawed man. Wallace calls him a "benevolent zealot."

Wallace's analysis borrows from other works, but much of it is also new, shrewd, and useful. He is by taste and by training a psychological anthropologist, a type that is nearly extinct now but was very influential in the 1940s and 1950s, when Irving Hallowell was in his prime. (Hallowell was an anthropologist at the University of Pennsylvania whose *Culture and Experience* traced his search for an evolutionary psychological structure rooted in human experience.) Wallace is attracted to interesting and complicated historical characters—Teedyschung, Handsome Lake, Jefferson—in whose lives culture and society sometimes seem to reduce to manifestations of individual traits and individual crises. And true to form, Wallace finds the key to Jefferson's paradoxical attitudes toward Indian peoples—and, more generally, to contradictory and tangled history of American policies toward Indians—in his "deeply controlling temperament." Jefferson confused himself with the people, Wallace contends, and projected onto them his own desire for control and (they always go together) his own fear of control.

THERE ARE GOOD reasons to be skeptical of any attempt to trace direct lines of causation between the psyche of a single individual and the policies of a nation or the social relations between peoples. For a start, the policies need to correlate with the particular flaws of the historical personage and be, at the same time, somehow unique. If Jefferson's Indian policies were pretty much of a kind with, or more benign than, those that preceded or followed, then it is hard to say why his personal failings mattered. Moreover, policies are multiple: any political actor or political thinker operates in numerous realms, and so some consideration has to be given to how policy in one area matches with policy in another area. Are they consistently disastrous? Does the right hand know what the left hand is doing? Are we willing to condemn them all?

Still further, national policies are enacted through a complicated legislative system, administered through a considerable bureaucracy, interpreted by courts, and resisted and negotiated both by the people who are the policies' objects and by lesser political units such as the states. The psychological historian must furnish some explanation of how this complicated process can possibly be the expression of an individual psyche. And finally, if national policies predictably yielded their

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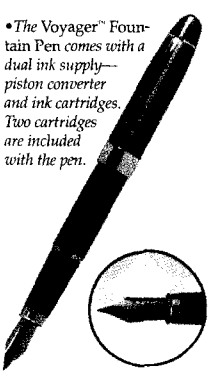

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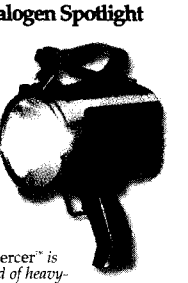

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desired results, the world would be a far simpler place; but almost nothing in the political realm works as it was designed to work. It is necessary, therefore, to explain just how Jefferson's policy yielded the world as it was.

Wallace attempts to meet only the first two of these challenges. He admits Jefferson was not alone in formulating American Indian policy, but he asserts that Jefferson's ideas became central to the American tradition of Indian policy, and are the distant cause of present-day problems. Substantiating such a claim is not an easy task.

THE CENTERPIECE OF Wallace's book is "Logan's Lament," which became the central symbol of the Vanishing Indian. Logan's relatives were brutally murdered by whites on the Ohio River in 1774. When he received no satisfaction, he unsuccessfully sought his own revenge, and then delivered his brief speech as the last of his line. Logan was admirable, eloquent, and—most important of all—doomed to disappearance. Jefferson inscribed the speech in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* as proof of the abilities and the natural eloquence of Indian peoples; it ended up in Washington Irving's *Sketch Book* and *McGuffey's Readers*, where it was memorized by generations of nineteenth-century schoolchildren who mourned dead Indians even as their country dispossessed live ones.

Logan serves Wallace well. The speech and its history do embody a complicated and often nasty set of cultural attitudes, and Logan was indeed a central figure in Jefferson's consciousness of Indian-white relations and in American attitudes toward Indian peoples. Wallace sees the story of Logan and his speech as a "tragic self-fulfilling philosophy of history that describes the process by which the fall of the Indian nations and the acquisition of their land would be accomplished." It is the template of Jefferson's Indian policy: white encroachment and atrocity, Indian retaliation, white invasion or threat of invasion, and finally a treaty that required a cession of land.

Their virtues notwithstanding, Indians as Indians had no place in Jefferson's vision of the future. Wallace stresses the ethnic, cultural, and racial homogeneity that Jefferson intended for the American future, and his vision was remarkably homogenous; but in making the issue primarily racial and ethnic, Wallace oversimplifies matters. Eighteenth-century ideas of race and culture, as he fully knows, do not correlate precisely with twentieth-century ideas. Republicans were the image of Jefferson's political desire, not white people. He distrusted the suitability of European immigrants for republican society more than he distrusted the suitability of Indians.

JEFFERSON WAS A racist; but unlike the Romantic nationalists who would follow him, his racism was anecdotal and particular rather than ideological and universal. He shared fully in American bigotry toward black people, but he believed that Indians were intellectually the equal of whites. But later Romantic racists nearly reduced republicanism itself to race, and tried to make the two inseparable, so that republicans would be defined as white males. Indians, Mexicans, Chinese, those Europeans who failed to qualify as white: they all joined African Americans outside the bounds of republican society and its guarantees.

Wallace condemns Jefferson's assimilation of Indians as cultural genocide, but in doing so he elides the issue into a racial thinking that fits the contemporary opponents of Jefferson and his Indian policy better than Jefferson himself. Jefferson demanded a commitment of all citizens to republicanism, and he identified that commitment with a way of life that all should follow. Despite his glowing language in the Declaration of Independence, however, he thought that race and culture disqualified some people from participation in republican society. Indians were the great exception to his exclusionary tendencies; yet Wallace oddly devotes little time to explaining why.

In the context of his own time, what was interesting about Jefferson was not that he thought Indians would be better off as republican farmers; he thought that *everyone* would be better off as republican farmers. What was unusual was that he would allow Indians to become American republican farmers when he was unwilling to allow African Americans and the vast majority of Europeans to do so. So why didn't Jefferson demonize Indians? The reasons, I think, were intellectual rather than temperamental and psychological.

Wallace pays considerable and penetrating attention to European writings, and particularly to French writings, on Indian peoples, but he does not adequately analyze the implications of the work of the Comte de Buffon for the understanding of Jefferson's attitudes. Buffon was a very important figure in this story. In truth, Buffon cared little about Indians as such; they were just another variety of American mammals, which, as a result of the physical environment in North America, were inferior to European mammals in size and strength. Buffon's followers went him one better: they claimed that when Europeans and their animals were introduced into North America, they inevitably degenerated.

Since Jefferson and Buffon shared a common environmentalism, Jefferson could not attack Buffon's premises. He could only question his facts. Overturning these facts—including the size, the sexual ardor, and the intelligence of Indians—was critical if the North American environment were to be redeemed as equal, if not as superior, to that of Europe. What was at stake in the interpretation of Indians, then, was nothing less than the fate of the American republic. If Indians were inferior, and if their inferiority was the consequence of the inferiority of their environment, then Americans would regress in a stunted environment; and the course of the American republic would not be progress, it would be degeneration.

This is why the *Notes on the State of Virginia*, with its grave discussions of Indian sexuality and the size of American mammals can read so oddly to a modern audience. Indian equality mattered deeply to Jefferson, and so did justice for them, but actual Indians were an inconvenience. Jefferson believed that Indians were capable of "civilization," though he had to explain why, for all their abilities, they no longer displayed what Europeans regarded as the markers of civilization. Their choice, as he saw it, was to merge with the advancing Americans or, like Logan, to resist nobly, even justifiably, and be swept away.

WALLACE ARGUES THAT Jefferson was a man who always saw a contested world with clearly opposing sides, and he never forgot which side he was on. For all his interest in, and admiration for, the Indians, he was (says Wallace) a revolutionary with a fierce loyalty to white, American, republican farmers who were advancing into the interior and dispossessing the inhabitants. He was convinced that the future of the republic rested on their success. What would appear to later observers as atrocities against Indians appeared to the frontier families who precipitated Lord Dunmore's War in 1774 (and thereby also Logan's Lament) "as a necessary process of ethnic cleansing (to use a later generation's phrase), a displacement of inveterate enemies who refused to let God's people settle upon land they had recently bought from the Indians in fair and public treaty."

Jefferson was implicated, politically and personally, in the forcible acquisition of Indian lands. As a speculator, he was involved in attempts to procure and to sell Indian lands, and as an elected official he was involved in fighting Indians. Wallace traces the long and tangled histories of the land companies in which Jefferson—like

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his father before him and like many of his famous contemporaries—was involved. Jefferson's own activities resulted in neither sales nor profits, nor is there any sign that he confused his public duties with his private profit, even though he later lied about the scope of his activities.

In fact, Jefferson was an Indian-fighter only at a distance. He was never involved in the bloody border wars, though he was able to muster considerable rhetorical fury about them, threatening to hound the Cherokees—"these wretches"—across the Mississippi and beyond the bounds of what was then American territory. Still, unlike the borderland settlers, Jefferson never became the sort of Indian-hater that Melville memorialized in *The Confidence Man*. He embodied a different approach that was eventually rejected, an American approach that emphasized white Americans and Indian peoples as children of a common mother. Jefferson certainly thought that instilling fear among Indians was a necessary component of American Indian policy, but it was a necessity that arose from past American injustice and might be corrected by justice itself: "justice is what we should never lose sight of & in time it may recover their esteem."

NEITHER JEFFERSON'S POLICIES nor his actions correlate with "ethnic cleansing" as I understand the term, since the cleansers generally regard their victims as inferior and unassimilable and their fate of no great moment. But Wallace, having waved the red flag of ethnic cleansing, never resolves the issue. The term becomes something of a distraction, simultaneously tarring Jefferson with something that he did not believe and conflating his policy with later Indian policies that might better fit the definition.

Jeffersonian policy regarded the dispossession of Indians as the necessary condition of republican progress, but he condemned assaults on Indians. He saw ultimate relief from those assaults not in the restraint of the despoilers, but in the retreat of the Indians or in their amalgamation with their republican enemies.

And yet Jefferson's policy appears relatively benign in comparison with what was to follow. In 1825, for example, John Quincy Adams recorded in his notes of a Cabinet meeting that Henry Clay, who was a Romantic racist, said of the Indians that "they were destined to extinction, and although he would never use or countenance inhumanity towards them, he did not think them, as a race, worth preserving. He considered them as essentially inferior to the Anglo-Saxon race, which were now taking their place on this continent. They were not an improvable breed, and their disappearance from the human family would be no great loss to the world." So stripping away Jeffersonian premises of equality, assimilation, and Indian rights does make a difference. Here, far more than in Jefferson, are the premonitions of ethnic cleansing.

DECIDING WHETHER THESE policies were or were not ethnic cleansing distracts us from what they most definitely were, and masks the most disquieting aspect of Jefferson's actual policy. No matter how much he squirmed and sought to avoid it, Jefferson linked the achievement of good—republicanism and freedom—with the performance of evil: expropriation and dispossession. About that, there can be no doubt. The dispossession of Indian peoples was not a corruption of American republicanism, it was a part of its very marrow.

Jefferson was deeply implicated in the worst aspects of early-nineteenth-century Indian policy, but it was as a republican theorist and not as a flawed man. The legacy of these early years is not only sobering, it is also complicated—more complicated, certainly, than Wallace makes it. Wallace wants the Jeffersonian legacy to explain also modern reservations with their high unemployment and drug and alcohol problems. But Jefferson never imagined Indian reservations. That was a policy that came half a century later. If reservations are a direct outgrowth of treaties and dispossession, as Wallace suggests, then the flip side of reservations—the preservation of the special status of Indian peoples as semi-sovereign nations—needs emphasis. This, too, is an aspect of Jeffersonian Indian policy. It is what the left hand was doing while the right was dispossessing.

And the left hand didn't really have much of a choice. The victories that the Indians of the Northwest Confederation won against the United States in the 1780s and early 1790s caused the Americans to give up their claim to Indian lands by right of conquest. The promise of "utmost good faith" in negotiations, and the practical validation of the treaty system in the early history of the republic, are also parts of early American policy. Those ideas have also lived on into the present, so that treaties meant to dispossess Indians have paradoxically worked to secure them potentially powerful rights. The misery on many reservations is real, but so is the remarkable resurgence of Indian political power in the last half a century. If Jefferson is going get the blame for the one, he should get at least some of the credit for the other, even if he probably imagined neither outcome.

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Shepard Krech's new book flirts with anachronism even more flagrantly than Wallace's book. Krech's subject is "the Native North American as ecologist and conservationist." Since Indian cultures have been widely portrayed as examples of "ecological wisdom and prudent care of the land and its resources," and since many modern Indians have embraced this view, it seems only fair to examine that image in light of what we know of the actions of Indian peoples. And yet Krech is an anthropologist who knows that the actions of a variety of historical peoples are going to be evaluated according to our own standards of appropriate action in the natural world, and not according to their standards. The results can be a little like the new California educational system: people speaking one language have to take tests in another language.

The point of the exercise can become elusive. Krech tries to minimize the problem first by admitting it and then by being very broad and inclusive in his definition of "ecologist" and "conservationist." He defines the standard that Indians must meet to count as conservationists as a series of negatives, and one positive: not despoiling, wasting, exhausting, or extinguishing resources, and deliberately leaving "the environment and resources like animal populations in a usable state for succeeding generations." The meaning of "ecology" is even more difficult, because the scientific understanding of ecology, as Krech points out, has shifted profoundly over the last quarter century. The older ecology proclaimed a world of balance and equilibrium in which ecosystems naturally progressed in a predictable pattern (or succession) to a harmonious climax. The new ecology sees a world in which change is intrinsic and natural, and random events exert great influence. Krech attaches no specific scientific theory to the "ecological" part of his "ecological" Indian; he merely demands that they should "have understood and thought about the environment and its interrelating components in systematic ways."

These definitions—the first one culturally loaded, the second one extraordinarily general—are an awkward burden. Words such as "waste" and "despoil" are wonderfully imprecise. What looks like waste to one people can be necessary to the very order of the universe to another people. Is animal sacrifice the waste of perfectly good animals, or the necessary use of animals to secure the propagation of life? Similarly, Indian religions present a systematic account of the environment, but they blend the supernatural with the natural in a way that is foreign to modern ecology.

Krech the environmental judge gives himself six cases to decide. The first two are examinations of just-so stories about the unecological Indian: chapters on the Pleistocene extinctions and the Hohokam, ancient agriculturists who lived near present day Phoenix. The second set of studies, called "Eden" and "Fire," are about the constructions of the epitome of ecological Indianness and the arguments for Indians as conservationists shaping a garden through fire. The final three, "Buffalo," "Deer," and "Beaver," are about over-hunting.

If you can put aside the knowledge that the standards for deciding the cases are a little silly, then the cases themselves can be fascinating. The theory of Pleistocene extinctions has been around for thirty years. Paul Martin, a palynologist and geochronologist, argued that the wave of extinctions in North America at the end of the Pleistocene, about 11,000 years ago, and the arrival of Paleoindians, the ancestors of modern Indian peoples, was no coincidence. Martin likened the progress of the Paleoindians across the continent to a blitzkrieg. They alone were responsible for the extinctions.

Krech systematically reviews the evidence, or rather the lack of it, for Martin's blitzkrieg. The problems are numerous. There is no evidence that all Paleoindians were big-game hunters. Why, then, did megafauna vanish where there were no hunters? Nor were extinctions confined to large megafauna. All kinds of other animals, plants, and insects disappeared. Did Indians eat them, too? Finally Martin excludes climatic change, pegged as the culprit in six previous extinction events in North America before the arrival of humans, as a cause for Pleistocene extinctions even though we know that there was widespread climatic change at the end of the Pleistocene.

Krech is unwilling to assign Indians primary responsibility for the extinctions, but he is willing to give them secondary responsibility, arguing that we know that humans have produced local extinctions elsewhere. But even the attribution of secondary responsibility may be stretching the evidence. Martin's thesis rises and falls on dates: the arrival of humans matches the decline of megafauna. Krech is aware that the dates are controversial, but he is willing to keep Martin's dates. Yet the consensus among archaeologists appears to be shifting, with the finding of sites that push the date of human arrival back much further than 11,000 years ago.

If Paeloindians were here several thousand years or more before the extinctions began, then Martin's thesis, which depends on the unfamiliarity of game animals with human hunters, falls apart. We are left with a scenario in which Paleoindians sat around for a couple of thousand of years ignoring the megafauna before waking up one morning and saying the Paleoindian equivalent of "Screw it, let's kill them all." The real lesson is less about Indians than about archaeology: never build big theories on what might be a fleeting coincidence of dates.

Krech's chapter on the Hohokam similarly dismantles the common presentation of Hohokam as a just-so story for not altering Mother Nature, at least in the desert. Although the Hohokam are best known for their extensive and impressive irrigation works in the Salt River Valley of Arizona, they were a remarkably flexible people who employed other kinds of farming techniques. They emerged during the first half of the first millennium A.D. and survived into the fifteenth century. We do not know what caused the ultimate abandonment of the large irrigation works. Each generation has found a different cause for the demise of the Hohokam; but these causes tell us far more about the time in which they were written than about the Hohokam. Krech convincingly shows the flaws in attributing the disappearance of the Hohokam to salinization, to the overcutting of timber in the mountains, and to catastrophic flooding and earthquakes. Whatever happened, the Hohokam had a remarkable run, maintaining their irrigated settlements for at least 900 years. Nor did the Hohokam disappear. In all likelihood they were the ancestors of the modern O'Ohdam.

This might look like Ecological Indians, 2; Debunkers, 0—but all that Krech has done is to undercut two environmental just-so stories about how humans will always foul their nest. He has not shown that Indians were, by his definitions, either ecologists or conservationists. The periods are too remote and the evidence is too thin.

As Krech points out, many people who use the Pleistocene extinctions and Hohokam as environmental morality tales also (and paradoxically) present North America on the eve of European settlement as an untouched Eden. As he says, "the two images are not easily reconciled." The middle section of his book attempts to explain how a world that was inhabited and altered by Indians could nevertheless look like an untouched Eden to Europeans. Krech sees population as an important factor in shaping the continent, but he does not want to reduce the issue to a crude formula based on population, to wit, that a lot of people equals a lot of degradation.

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Krech puts the population north of Mexico at four to seven million people at contact—a reasonable compromise in the hotly debated world of Indian demography. The populations of Indian peoples, he observes, were "too small to have made much of a difference," and when European epidemics drastically reduced their populations, their lands "rested and recovered from whatever human pressures they had been under." For this reason, North America was a continent far less dramatically altered than Europe, and the changes that its inhabitants had wrought were often erased by epidemics. And so it may not have been an Eden, but it sure looked like one.

Still, the continent *was* altered; and this leads Krech to fire. And fire leads him to the kind of problems that inevitably plague his book. Krech understands the Indian use of fire as pragmatic, and it "is clear that when lit at optimum times of the year, fires had a positive impact on the growth of grasses and animal forage," and most likely created and maintained a number of "fire succession ecosystems." Indians were in these cases ecologists, or Good Indians. Yet Indians also used fire to deliver signals and to hinder the advance of enemies. Indians failed to think of the ecological consequences of these fires, and they let campfires escape. Such fires, particularly in drought years could be immensely destructive. Bad Indians.

This is not a distinction that always holds even on its own terms. Indians who burned grasslands to hinder enemies, for example, most certainly thought about the ecological consequences. Burning grasslands meant diverting buffalo away from enemy camps and depriving enemy horses of food. Moreover, ecological creation inevitably involves ecological destruction. To create a "fire succession ecosystem" means destroying the system that was previously in place. In Krech's terms, Indians thought "ecologically" in all these cases. His verdict seems based less on the existence of "ecological" thinking than whether Krech approves of the results.

The real issues in these instances of periodic destruction is whether the species affected can recover and whether populations can sustain themselves. Krech sometimes confuses the issue of endangering vulnerable species with the merits of being a clean-plate ranger and eating everything you kill. In his treatment of buffalo jumps (hunting sites at which buffalo were driven over cliffs) and pounds (the sites where buffalo could be trapped and their escape cut off), he shows that these could result in the slaughter of hundreds, even of thousands, of buffalo at a time, more in many instances than the hunters could butcher and preserve. At other times, Indians slaughtered buffalo only for their tongues. Krech cites these instances to demonstrate that Indians were not "conservationists." But surely conservation is meaningful only when the harvest of a resource exceeds the reproduction of that resource. If the hunted population remains abundant, then waste becomes a meaningless vice.

Eventually buffalo did decline, as did deer and beaver, largely in the face of market hunting, the loss of habitat, and ecological invasion and competition from domestic animals. In explaining why Indians do not institute dramatic conservation measures, Krech turns away from his anachronistic search for "conservation" and looks to culture. What appeared as waste to later observers, he explains, was sometimes a ritual necessity to Indians who, conceiving of at least some buffalo as other than human persons, thought that any buffalo that escaped from a pound might warn his fellows. And how could they attribute declining numbers to excessive killing when they believed that buffalo lived underground, returning annually to replenish the herds? It was possible to offend buffalo by neglecting rituals and by failing to treat them with respect, in which case they might remain underground; but it was impossible to kill them all. "Were these Indians ecologists or conservationists?" Only, Krech answers, if buffalo living underground are considered part of an ecological system, and only if what is being conserved is not buffalo as such but "one's economically vital, culturally defined, historically contingent, and ritually expressed relationship with the buffalo."

WERE INDIANS ECOLOGISTS and conservationists? The answer is embedded in the question, as Krech knew all along. These are modern Western concepts based on a science developed largely in the West. At times Indian beliefs and Western conservation and ecology overlapped, but at times they were fundamentally different in inspiration. Indians by and large conceived of animals as other-than-human persons, or as beings in the care of other-than-human persons; and ritual rather than harvest or even habitat primarily determined their abundance and scarcity. These systems were unable to adjust to the commodification of animals by Europeans. And so conservation, when it appears, is "largely an artifact of Western ideology." Krech concludes, predictably once he makes his necessary turn to culture, that Indian actions were "not necessarily rational according to the premises of Western ecological conservation."

The notion of "the ecological Indian" empowers Indians, for Krech, since it is a handy club with which to beat whites. But it also imprisons Indians, since virtually anything that Indians do that goes against the stereotype—and they do plenty—gets them denounced as un-Indian. Thus it becomes un-Indian to seek development to relieve the often crushing poverty of modern reservations and Indian communities. In actual practice, Indians have been on both sides of many environmental issues, and often one Indian group will support a project that others oppose.

Krech expects his conclusions to disturb those who look to indigenous peoples as models for "a kinder, gentler way of relating to the environment." But this, along with Krech's examples of modern Indians being environmentally sensitive and insensitive, is an odd way to end the book. He carelessly conflates the failure of Indians to mimic the premises of modern ecology with their failure to provide "a kinder, gentler way of relating to the environment." Krech may not intend it this way, for this is certainly not an anti-Indian book, but his conclusion implies that Indians—at least those who do not share our ecological views—are not only irrational but also cruel, while the rest of us are at least struggling to be kind.

There is a disturbing smugness here that reappears in some of the book's closing vignettes. One of them concerns the recent hunt by the Makahs in Washington of a progressive icon currently more powerful than even "ecological Indians": the gray whale. The Makahs took their whale amid incredible press coverage, and its death was widely lamented. Krech is critical of the Makahs, and favorably quotes Paul Watson of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, a man who deserves to be inducted into the Smugness Hall of Fame. Krech stops his story before the kill; but just after the kill, and during the whales' migration, numerous young whales washed ashore dead. This received virtually no press coverage. The young whales had starved to death. Either the recovery of gray whales had been too successful and their numbers exceeded food supply, or ocean conditions were changing in unknown ways that were depriving whales of food.

What if this incident becomes an object of analysis a couple of hundred years from now? It doesn't seem at all obvious to me that the Makahs will come out badly and that their opponents will come out well. It is the attempt to ban the hunt that might one day seem irrational; and the public's kindness toward whales might seem the kind of sentimentality that masks a deeper cruelty, and a terrible obliviousness to the ways in which their own lives as consumers endanger not a few whales, but entire oceans. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Last Days

NEVER EXACTLY GENIUSES, those Christians who predicted a millennial conflagration are now very intellectually hungover. As they blink into the profane daylight of the year 2000 and nurse their horribly throbbing theories, they put me in mind of that wicked aphorism by the French writer and theorist Edmond Jabès: "Even the future has a morning after."

WE HAVEN'T SEEN MUCH SINCE NEW Year's Day of Jerry Falwell, who claimed that Y2K was "God's instrument to shake this nation." And what has become of the Reverend Ralph Moats, who moved his small church to Montana in 1992, in preparation for apocalypse, or of Michael S. Hyatt, author of *The Millennium Bug: How to Survive the Coming Chaos*, who predicted that "there will be a crisis on or before January 1, 2000 ... if you are a Christian, you believe that nothing happens by accident ... everything falls out according to God's purpose. And that includes the Millennium Bug. Even though it is the result of what is in one sense a colossal mistake on the part of man, the Millennium Bug is in another, more cosmic sense as necessary as the Flood and as inevitable as your last breath."

HYATT, DOUBTLESS FATIGUED BY THE necessary cerebral renovation, has delegated his response to a spokesman named Franklin Sanders, whose "Y2K Post-Mortem" can be found on Hyatt's website. Like any good deputy, Sanders begins by snarling on behalf of his intellectual masters: "Now the postgame geniuses are, like roaches, crawling out of the woodwork everywhere. With perfect hindsight they revile people like Gary North, Michael Hyatt, and Jim Lord, whose shoelaces they aren't tall enough to reach, let alone untie." Sanders then commences an apologia that, like the notion of dry cleaning or the prospect of the overstuffed sandwich, combines apparently contradictory or troublesome concepts in one blithe package. In one form or another, this defense has been used by Christian apocalyptics everywhere, not only in this century, and is therefore worth careful mockery.

THEIR FIRST ARGUMENT—RATHER forced upon them, after all—is that the millennium moment was not *the* millennium moment. It hasn't happened yet, but it *will* happen at some later stage. Christians have been saying this for 2,000 years, of course; they are more vulnerable than Jews because of the inconvenient fact that Christians believe that the Messiah arrived and that somehow *that* moment was not apocalyptic, either. Hence the strange idea of the Second Coming, which all Christians, formally at least, believe: that Christ will "come again, to judge the quick and the dead." Why Christ would need to come again, unless there were something deficient in his first ministry, is anyone's guess. All this prolonged coming and going is profoundly unmessianic and should be embarrassed by the hope expressed in Isaiah 13:22 that "her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged."

"HER DAYS." WHO IS ISAIAH'S DARK lady? If the current apocalyptics are to be believed, she must be the fat lady. For some odd reason, several of the present apologists are fond of saying, apropos of the end of the world, that "the fat lady has not yet sung." Indeed, they creatively continue, the fat lady has not even gotten onto the stage yet. From this follow predictions like those of Grant R. Jeffrey, author of *Armageddon: Earth's Last Days*, that "it's not a January problem ... it will manifest itself gradually throughout the year, like maybe in March or April or May, or even later."

THE IMPIETY OF DISCUSSING GOD'S providence as if the world were a nightclub (and God a fat lady?) is striking. But what is more impious, really, is the language of the Reverend Moats of the End Times Harvest Church, who apologetically told *The Washington Post* that "God has his own schedule." This appears as humility, but its air of grand concession, as if the reverend had just twigged this radical idea, is proof of its actual arrogance. Yes, God has his own "schedule," and his own Filofax, and doubtless his own cell phone, too. God is up to speed on Y2K.

BUT IMPIETY IS BUILT INTO THIS monstrous game of precise reckoning. Sir Thomas Browne, the seventeenth-century author of the *Religio Medici*, wrote, "I believe the world grows near its end," but he added that "to determine the day and year of this inevitable time is not only convincible and statute madness but also manifest impiety: how shall we interpret Elias' six thousand years, or imagine the secret communicated to a rabbi which God hath denied unto his angels?" We might gloss Browne as follows: If God has his own schedule, why on earth would the Reverend Moats know anything about it? Hyatt wrote, before the millennium dawned, that "we of all people [i.e., Christians] should have been able to predict a coming disaster, not because we knew anything about the Millennium Bug, but because we know something about God." Well, what?

SO THE APOCALYPTICS HAVE POSTponed the apocalypse but like to promote contradictory concessions: on the one hand God has his own schedule, but on the other hand "our prayers were answered," because none of us, of course, was actually praying for disaster. On the contrary, we were praying for a smooth transition. But how can our prayers be answered if God is simply dancing to his own calendar? And on another hand—a third hand, useful when the two we are born with are moving in opposite directions—"Y2K didn't annihilate western civilization. The Almighty God didn't do what we expected, and proved himself yet again more merciful than we can think or imagine." Thus: God has his own schedule, but also complies with our schedules by answering our prayers, while simultaneously failing to do what we expected by sparing us all. Such powers of compartmentalization must be what won God something as important as his own schedule in the first place.

THE ODDITY OF CHRISTIANITY IS THAT it is an eschatological religion founded on a coming that has already happened. There is a way in which Christianity is always living in the past; like Karl Kraus's definition of the historian, it is a "prophet facing backward." Perhaps it is this—this actuality, 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem—that produces the Technicolor literalism so beloved of Christians and that faith in providence that so bewilders nonbelievers. Certainly nothing is stronger than the idea that "everything falls out according to God's purpose." When that is the case, you don't need to know what God's plan is, only that he has one; you don't need to know his schedule, only that he has one. And how do you know that? Because "everything falls out according to God's purpose." The circularity explains why, as far as I know, not one of the current apocalyptics has allowed the confounding of his predictions to confound his faith. Well, perhaps one is beginning to waver. An English newspaper reported that R.G. Stair, "a self-proclaimed latter-day John the Baptist" from North Carolina, said that "if the Lord God Almighty does not make a major move before the year 2000, I'll tell God to go to Hell." Now that's more like it.

JAMES WOOD

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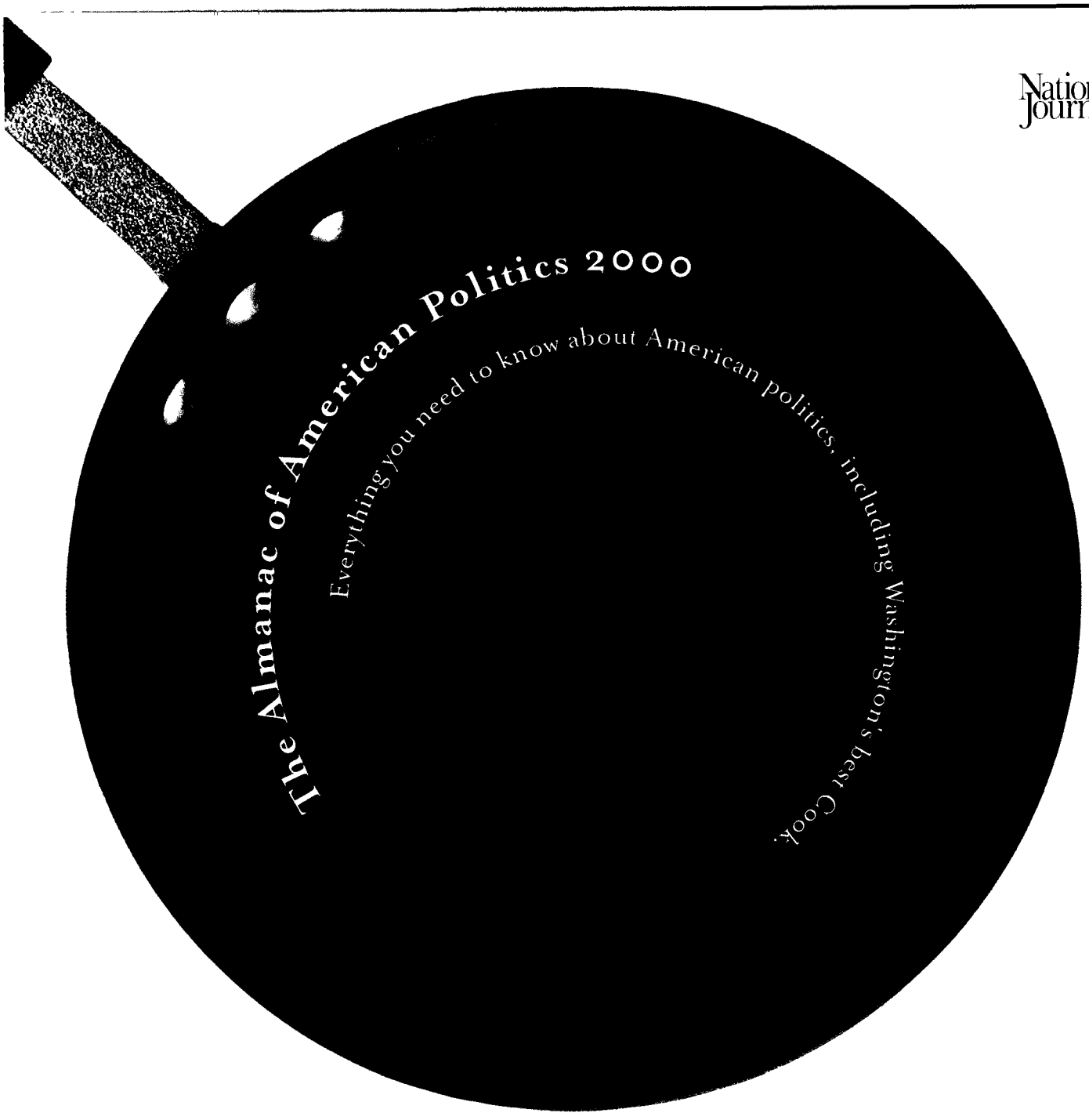
National Journal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